

# LUTHERAN WORLD

PUBLICATION OF THE  
LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

THE FIFTH LATIN AMERICAN LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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Gottfried Brakemeier

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Vol. XIX, No. 3, 1972

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### About this issue:

*The Fifth Latin American Lutheran Conference was held last August in Argentina. All five of the major articles in this issue were addresses given at that meeting. It is interesting to note that the keynote speaker was an Indonesian, Dr. Sitompul. Thus an attempt was made to emphasize the necessity for lateral exchange in the southern hemisphere and among the churches in the so-called 'Third World'. The opening speech called for flexibility and mobility based on the biblical narratives and experiences and which requires an openness for the future, but the place for concrete involvement is here and now in the problems of the world.*

*The other four articles are by Latin Americans or those who have worked and had considerable experience there. President Held points out that, in accordance with the New Testament and Luther, renewal begins and continues with repentance and forgiveness. Professor Brakemeier asks that we draw out the structural and social consequences of justification by faith and calls for a missionary pluralism related to the specific and particular context. Pastor Ojasti in a somewhat unsystematic fashion pleads for the gospel to be incarnated in action on behalf of man. Dr. Meyer reviews the efforts for unity. Dialog without implementation leads to frustration but new realizations of unity can well lead to new separations. He also touches on an aspect that I suspect we ought to hear much more about and which may be the Achilles heel of ecumenical efforts and organizations, namely, that by losing sight of the universal and transnational dimensions in our current fascination with regionalism and localism we may well supplant confessional boundaries with a far more serious and rigid set of national, regional, racial and cultural ones. Pastor George Posfay, LWF Latin America Secretary, reports on the conference and some of the reactions to it.*

*Interconfessional concerns dominate the documentation section. The final report of the Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission on "The Gospel and the Church" is available for publication at last. It deserves careful reading. It marks a stage of advance that in the current climate in Rome would have been difficult to reach today. Dr. Vajta of the Strasbourg Institute provides both a commentary on and assessment of the report and points to what still needs to be done.*

*Although seemingly a permanent item on the agenda of interconfessional dialogs, Orthodox-Lutheran conversations have been sporadic and been somewhat meager in the production of tangible results. We, therefore, are pleased to bring a report of and the theses agreed to in the Russian Orthodox-Finnish Lutheran conversations.*

*The Geneva Diary, written by the Secretary for Christian Education, Herb Schaefer, is devoted to an international consultation on Christian Education*



curricula. The majority of the participants were from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. If space would have permitted, an even more detailed report of their reactions and concerns for the future would have been interesting.

In this 25th anniversary year of the Lutheran World Federation, we alert you now to the next issue of this journal which will be dedicated to this anniversary.

L.K.G.



## The Call of Christ and our Response

### I.

1. The call of Christ and our response forms an important topic for the Fifth Latin American Lutheran Conference. The theme concerns the life of our churches in general as well as the life of its members personally. Holy Scripture repeatedly tells us how God has called his chosen people to accomplish his plan for this world. If he wants to act, if he wants to bring a nation into motion, his chosen ones immediately become his servants, those whom he wants to use as instruments in the building of his kingdom. This is the importance of the call both in the Old and New Testaments, where it is clearly stated that the call of Christ is always in contradiction to our human aspirations, hopes, ties, tensions, hostility and traditions. It is quite clear that each person receiving the call has to make his own decision. Each call asks for a decision, requires that an answer be given. God does not like man to be only an observer, but each man has to get personally involved immediately after hearing and accepting the call. It is not done by listening to the words alone, but the idea is that man must follow and obey the Word, both in peaceful as well as in dangerous situations.

2. The "call of Christ" meets us in the New Testament in the often repeated saying of Jesus, "Follow me". Receiving his call positively involves following him for a lifetime, surrendering oneself to become an instrument in the Lord's work, entering the community of his fellowship. Those answering the call are people who are actually converted, who in their beings reproach the existing conditions which are not in accord with God's will.

A very exciting feature in the New Testament is that "following Jesus" pictures a reality, in which the address or direction of the call remains open to all mankind. What we intend to say is this: Jesus is choosing not only one group, one level of people. He is not interested to create a monopoly for a certain group of people. Rather, he approaches and addresses all levels and layers of society, all age groups, old and young, children, men and women, to become his disciples. He opens up a new possibility of life which forms a new era for mankind. He liberates people imprisoned by the powers of darkness, sin and everything else that intimidates man in life—in all fields of life, in politics, economics, culture and not to forget, in religion itself. So the Lord who is calling man is the *Lord of history* who is at work at all times.

3. Just for these reasons it is said that people who are living in Christ have become new creatures. They are living in the order of a new community amidst the disorder of this world.

From the message of the Old Testament we see that the meaning of God's call carries not only the idea of migration or geographical removal in a physical sense, but has most important existential implications, that is the understanding of man, or to be more precise, the freedom of man. Both individually and collectively we see the importance of freedom, of liberation from tradition. Abraham, for instance, had to leave his native soil with all its inherent ancestral laws and traditions; in the same way, the twelve tribes of Israel had to leave Egypt, when they heard God's call through Moses, who was to bring them to become a free people, an independent nation amongst the surrounding nations. Here it becomes obvious that God's call to them is the realization of God's masterplan, according to which they will be freed from all slavery. God's calling implies that God takes action to save his people. Israel's salvation implies the freedom of Israel.

Renewal, as a consequence of God's call in Christ to mankind, means becoming known by a new name. Remember all the biblical figures whose names have been changed: Abram became Abraham, Jacob became Israel, Simon became Peter, and Saul became Paul, and so on. This change of name has manifold implications. In the same way we see in the Bible the change of functions. Jesus' disciples for instance, who were fishermen on the shores of Lake Galilee, became fishers of men all over the world. Thus we come to the conclusion: the call of God in Christ changes man in his totality.

Then there is the theological image of God as the power of the future, bringing hope to mankind and directing it to its future in the resurrection of Jesus and the promises of God, thus releasing to history possibilities of renewal which have to be realized socially. Then there is the image of *Shalom*, stressing wholeness both for man and society, and the building up of peace in freedom and justice.

4. Not to be excluded is that the call to follow Jesus is closely connected with the new status of adoption as "children of God". As Luther himself has indicated, imitation does not make us sons, but sonship makes us imitators. The state of being God's children is a condition in which we have to follow Christ at any moment. This obedience includes an active, dynamic, creative and communicative cooperation of the children with the work of the Father in his kingdom. A child's obedience cannot only be passive, an obedience in a state of inertia, to be found in expressions put into written statements. This brings to mind the problems and disputes about mere terminology in the church of all centuries. The formulas and wordings of the church throughout history are no absolute standards, they are not functioning as remedies ready to cure all diseases. But all the formulations and credos are like signposts, communicative terms which enable men to unite, not the opposite, to divide the understanding, or to divide the men who are of one conviction. To follow Christ means to know that, whereas the goals of God's plans are always the same, the forms and performance of his plan are changing. We see how Abraham,



who was following God's call, subjected himself, at any given moment, to God's plan and God's word. He obeyed not only God's word in its past form and setting, but he paid his obedience anew at every instant, on any day in which God spoke to him. The child God had given to him in a time past he did not try to defend at a time when God told him to sacrifice that child. He was not bound to the wording of terms, but he was open to the future where God was still to act in his life, because God's word and action are greater than the wording of his truth by man. Particularly the adoption whereby we become "children of God" involves that we know about God's masterplan, that we are aware of God's purpose towards this world. In short, we are allowed to know and to participate in God's work in his kingdom. In other words, we are to be in an attitude of "imitating" the work of God. Just as Jesus Christ came to save mankind by sacrificing himself, so in the same way people who are following Christ are bound to imitate the life of Christ, that is, in the act of saving mankind. As long as the work of the church intends to save man in his total being, then the church is an example or an imitator of Christ. Jesus has already given the basis of this imitation to his disciples whom he called. "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15) This example is needed not just within an inner circle, or among a certain group of people, but towards the world, towards all men. It might be that the churches in our local regions, if at all, are giving too limited an example for the society and nations surrounding them, because the element of saving people who are outside our own group has disappeared.

How important it is to become a model, a pioneer, in the building and edification of just societies, whether it be the outcome of individual efforts or takes on the form of community projects, so that it can be said that the pilot project can benefit all, and becomes the source and means of transmitting welfare to all members of society in our area. Usually, the elements of each example have special features to be amplified for all members of society.

On the other hand, following Christ means to cooperate with God. The working relationship of man with God became an important question in the church of Corinth in the framework of the edification of the church. This is explained in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:5-13). The meaning of cooperation between Apollus, Paul and God (in verse 9 the term "synergoi" [fellow workmen] is being used) shows that God is pleased to let his servants ("diakonoi"—verse 5) work together in cooperation and fellowship. They become servants, and God himself, as the giver of life, takes action which lets the church grow and be built.

5. In the framework of our theme "The call of Christ and our response", it is important to realize the relation of servant and service in relation to work and vocation. First of all, let us look at the Hebrew term of work (*abad*) which means "work" and "worship" as well. To be a servant or a "boy", or "coolie" means to have to work. Work is the essence of service. The use of this term



is valid in the sphere of the family (Gen. 24:2), in the sphere of government (I Kings 20:25) and also in regard to the worship of God (Ps. 2:11; 100:2). The use of this Hebrew verb in the Old Testament implies that the area of service is not limited to one activity only, but it is meant for all spheres of life. The same observation is valid for the Hebrew term *malaka*, which means function, commission, mission. The term is applied for the commission to fulfill God's command. But the root is not only used for the work of priest and prophet, but also for agricultural work or the duties of business. It is equally applied for the edification of the temple as God's house, as well as for the construction of housing for the human population.

By now it should have become clear that any kind of work can perform a service and that reminds us at the same time of the basic importance of work for each human being expressed in God's command for man to work (Gen. 1-2). Wherever we are, *there* is the arena of God's work. The separation between working ethics and private ethics is also illegitimate according to the Bible. The trend to separate the two is very dangerous for people called by Christ himself, especially for Christians working within society or within a government institution of this world. The Bible does not recognize any difference of standard of conduct for a businessman acting in the realm of business and his behavior in his own household; and it is the same with a politician acting out of longing for power, accompanied by crimes, taking advantage for his own pressure group; this behavior cannot be separated from his personal life as a witness for Christ within his own family. Those who are working as businessmen or politicians lead a life which is totally under wholly one power: either it is entirely under the control of the kingdom of God, or under the kingdom of darkness. Those who become heirs of the kingdom of God belong to this kingdom also in their capacity as businessmen and politicians, as legal office holders within society. They are called to resist sin and power of the devil in any form and in every field of life, without any exceptions. The confrontation is not limited to the area of family life or limited to certain periods of time. God the almighty holds power in all spheres and at all times. Just as God is holy, those who are called by him have to be holy also. (1 Peter 1:13-25)

## II.

Hitherto we have seen the call of Christ, where the features of "following Christ", "imitating Christ" and "cooperating with God", "becoming God's children" are seen as a result of the call of God himself. This call is God's grace, and consequently he asks for a commitment where the responsibility of our work cannot be divided into a "spiritual task", and a "secular task", or into working ethics and private ethics.

At this point, let us look for the connections for the work or task within society, where development is the call or direction of our work today.

1. We see that national development work is an important issue which should be pioneered by the church. The Bible does not say anything in the negative about nation building or social and governmental development. Rather, the pointed, positive example (κατ' ἐξοχήν) is the time of King Solomon. Since Solomon, the foreign ethnic elements formed a major element within the nation building of Israel. The endeavor to establish diplomatic relationships among the surrounding nations was taken up immediately after he succeeded to this throne. By exchange of goods from nations with a more advanced cultural standing, the international trade, transportation and foreign exports (those which King Hiram of Tyre sent them) lifted the status and independence as a nation.

Here it is evident to us, that for nation-building there is a need for concrete support from outside the local area, wherewith the ties of peace and friendship between nations become strengthened; that is, the presence of foreign ethnic groups or individuals—not as colonial rulers and exploiters which deplete the host nation, but as instruments of salvation and helpful partners. That is very clearly stated by the Bible in the report about Joseph's presence in Egypt, where Joseph becomes a channel of salvation for the entire population and government of Egypt. (Gen. 39:1-6.)

The salvation of other peoples is the work (commission) of God's people in the world. And this is valid for our present times: the church should become the pioneer in releasing men oppressed by poverty, stripped of fundamental human rights, miserable without the possibility for adequate employment. If the church does not move and take concrete action, those whom the church is obliged at all times to save, without discrimination regarding person, will soon perish. The church has no choice in her service; she is not permitted to serve the upper classes or special social groups. Her service has to have a saving result for the welfare of all men in all places.

2. The development cannot proceed jointly, without correcting, supervising and controlling, or better, eradicating the elements of evil, the powers of darkness, energies which cause man to become miserable, such as suppression, corruption and injustice, with its inequitable distribution of power, its exploitative and dehumanizing structures. Jeremiah receives (as is reported in chapter 1 at his calling) a clear commission to break down and build up: "See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." (Jeremiah 1:10) To break down means down to the roots of all evil which had developed at his time, but at the same time to build up what is true and just in front of God. At our time, too, the church, that is people who have been called to be courageous enough to criticize, to break up the elements of evil apparent in our society and our nation. Whether it concerns form or content, where those elements have become impediments for the salvation of man in the perspective of God's kingdom. Traditional law and customs, conservative thinking and social



structures which are not a basis for the welfare of people in their human rights and which do not allow man to be raised to his position as created by God, as a free and independent being—these elements of evil are those which the church should strive, with ideas and impulse, to remove. The church is called to improve in order that society can be in its proper position as a fellowship of love, a fellowship saving people in all kinds of distress.

3. Development is closely connected with witness. In several areas of my home country, Indonesia, people have seen how closely the gospel is related to development. Wherever the gospel works to witness and proclaim the works of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, there schools and hospitals, workshops and houses for invalids have been established. It is no wonder that those who as children attended former mission schools are now occupying government and social positions.

In Isaiah 43:10-21, we observe clearly that the servants of the Lord become witnesses to God's work of salvation wherever concretely the reconstruction of the destroyed earth takes place, that is God's own work. Nature which has been so far only a wasteland becomes the source of life and welfare of his creatures. Witness will be borne to the servants of God when God saves man by himself. Therefore, in each service which has been set into motion by God, where its breadth contains the salvation of the fellowman, there the witness takes place as a human answer for the fellow men in the community. And immediately we see this witness, wherever the glory of God is being proclaimed.

4. The call of God in Christ at the same time forms leadership. This is to be seen in Moses, Joshua, Peter, Paul, and so on. The elements of leadership are elements of control, management and guidance to people in the neighborhood. To develop people to become leaders, advisors, servants of society, education is needed. The book of Proverbs (chapter 1:1ff) emphasizes that people who are willing to receive wisdom, learning, knowledge and education will be able, later on, to control themselves, society, nation and leadership as well.

The term of *κυβέρνησις* (the art of guidance), which is used by the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Bible) in Proverbs 1:5 is a characteristic for that need of education. It is therefore that King Solomon asked God for wisdom, a wise heart, on his enthronement (coronation) day, so that he could control, guide and serve his nation in both domestic and foreign affairs. The basis of education is most important in building a nation, in the areas in which it aids a nation to become strong and healthy, to live in the discipline which contributes to the welfare of all mankind, in the church as well as in the society itself.

Finally, I quote some conclusions from the 1970 conference of SODEPAX (Report entitled "Liberation Justice Development—Asian Ecumenical Conference for Development, Tokyo, Japan, 14-22 July 1970", pp. 55-56):



"We recognize that Christians have to act in response to the call of God within the given situation in which He has placed us. This demands a thorough and realistic grasp of the situation in the light of the Christian faith. We suggest below certain concrete guidelines for possible action:

—The Church has also the prophetic task of awakening the conscience of the public, especially of those who are the decision-makers, in the light of God's demand for justice.

—We should make people aware that maintenance of an unjust social order cannot have priority over the urgent demands of justice, and that all human social life can advance only through continuous struggle and conflict.

—We should join with other men of goodwill, including men of other faiths, in exposing the inefficiency, corruption, indiscipline, disorganization, personal and group egoism, anti-social and irresponsible behavior, nepotism, red tape, bribery, exploitation and oppression wherever it exists in our own societies.

—We should help people to evaluate critically the values of a consumer society to see where these are in basic conflict with the values of the Gospel. At least some Christians should bear witness to this criticism, by the way they live in evangelical poverty, manifesting the values of simplicity, non-aggression, joy, peace, and total availability to the service of the poor and the oppressed.

—We should correct the misunderstanding of Christian love as weakening oneself by making sacrifices for others; we should learn to think of love positively as strengthening the weak and checking and correcting evil and injustice, thus enabling the weak also to exercise genuine love. Love expresses itself in solidarity with the poor and oppressed so that they too may express love. It must take concrete shape not only in human relations but in organizational interaction, with mutual correction and criticism for the health of the whole society.

—We should awaken the conscience of people to see that criticism of possible violence in the demand for justice on the part of the oppressed may amount to condoning the violence being done to the dignity and freedom of the victims of injustice.

—We should help people to see that the necessary transformation of the structures of economic and political power in society may demand revolutionary changes, that law and order can often become instruments in the hands of the rich and the powerful for pursuing their own selfish ends. The Church needs to develop permanent organs of discernment to see the calling of God in each given situation."

I hope that this Conference brings fruit to the church and society

## The Gospel and our Renewal

### I

It is a well-known fact that the first public manifestation of the movement that historically brought forth the communities of our confessional family, began with the thesis: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent . . .' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."<sup>1</sup> Luther himself explains the term "repentance" according to the biblical text of Rom. 12:2, as the transformation of Christians by the renewal of their minds.<sup>2</sup> In other words, it is a continuous process of regeneration and "reformation" that the gospel not only requires but also initiates and furthers.

It should also be stated that the gospel message preached by Jesus Christ, according to the version offered by the first two gospels, is summed up in a message of repentance: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17),<sup>3</sup> or in the more elaborate formula: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15) In the preceding verse, the evangelist Mark had just pointed out expressly that this is the gospel of God announced by Jesus. From this is evident that the gospel is preached to us in a context of repentance and conversion, a truth easily forgotten. Therefore, this truth is emphasized again and again in the Lutheran confessions. "The faith of which we are speaking . . . has its existence in penitence" (existit in poenitentia, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession" IV: 142, p. 126),<sup>4</sup> i.e., with regard to its origin and growth to maturity, faith involves the realization of our inadequacy as well as the process of renewal.

The foregoing is true not only for those who hear the gospel, but also for those who preach it and need to become equipped for that task. The call of Christ, as given in the above-mentioned texts, takes on an immediacy and concreteness in the call of the first disciples, who were to become the first preachers of the gospel. "Conversion", in this case, is the entrance into discipleship. The call of Christ converted them into students in the school of the gospel. They had to learn their lessons before taking upon themselves their share of the mission assigned to them by Christ. The pertinent biblical narratives (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20) demonstrate very clearly that under the impact of the voice of Christ they left everything, that is, they gave up the life they had led

<sup>1</sup> The first of Luther's 95 Theses, as quoted from *Luther's Works* (American Edition), ed. by Harold J. Grimm, Vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, "Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses, or Explanations of the Disputation Concerning the Value of Indulgencies", p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> The Bible texts are quoted from the Revised Standard Version.

<sup>4</sup> The quotations from the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959).



up to that moment in order to embrace the new responsibilities and concerns of the mission of Jesus Christ, in which they were to participate by virtue of their "repentance" and "conversion". Through the call of Christ they became brethren in the school of the gospel.

## II

As Lutheran churches and communities in Latin America, scattered and divided as we are from one end of the continent to the other, we have interpreted our presence and mission here to be an act of obedience to the call of Christ to preach the gospel. "According to the measure of faith which God has assigned" (Rom. 12:3) to each, every one of our groups has fulfilled a mission and is still doing it. However, we are following the call of Christ as members of a divided family. The experiences of many years of attempts to arrange a greater cooperation among our churches show that the search for our own unity is surprisingly difficult. In his introduction to the issue of *Ekklesia*<sup>5</sup> (Year IX, No. 20-21, p. 53) dealing with the Fourth Latin American Lutheran Conference (Lima, 1965), Dr. Béla Lesko expresses his concern over the lack of a profound Christian dialog in the various interdenominational activities and meetings designed to further the unity of the churches. One must acknowledge that the interrelations between Lutherans in Latin America show in general this same deficiency, even though there are exceptions to the rule. Evidently there is a basic requirement that emerges from the call of Christ, as well as from our own situation, namely that we interpret the inter-Lutheran relations in our divided family as an invitation to begin a sincere and renovating dialog about the meaning of the gospel for our witness and service in Latin America.

It has been said many times that the specific responsibility of Lutheranism within the ecumenical movement consists of the theological and doctrinal contributions which tend to influence that the unity, action and mission of the churches be based on the truth of the gospel. It would be difficult to disagree with this statement. However, it would be equally difficult to maintain that our churches in Latin America have already become aware of the theological contributions they could make—much less to state that they have made them. Taking this into consideration, we as Lutherans must be modest with regard to our claims. The situation in which we live impels us to seek to understand anew the gospel for our fellowship and for our action as Christian churches.

Taking my own situation and that of my church of mostly German immigrant origin as an example, I have to admit that we have inherited our understanding of the gospel from a historical, religious and cultural context which is different from that of our Latin American churches and even more so from that of the Latin American milieu of today. Nevertheless, many of us and of our predecessors in the ministry of our churches, have thought of themselves as

<sup>5</sup> *Ekklesia* is the theological review, edited by the Lutheran Theological Seminary (Facultad Luterana de Teología) at José C. Paz, Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 1957 through 1967.



teachers of the gospel in Latin America. I believe that I am not far from the truth when I say that this conviction of being the best and truly authentic teachers of the message of salvation for the Latin American people has contributed to our inter-Lutheran divisions and perhaps is still hindering the way to fraternal cooperation with a view towards the eventual unity that our churches are seeking. This is another aspect of our situation that demands a sincere answer to the call of Christ for repentance and renewal. As he himself said: "You have one teacher, and you are all brethren." (Matt. 23:8)

### III

The demand for renewal becomes even more urgent in view of the history of the interrelationships of our churches and congregations. Each has felt that the others in their attitudes and actions have at times demonstrated a lack of fraternal love and Christian understanding. Due to the lack of communication, as well as open dialog and forgiveness, these feelings still have negative effects in the present.

The Lutheran Reformation has been inspired by the theological-biblical discovery that the gospel is the liberating message of the forgiveness of sins and that the justification of the sinner is brought about by the remission of his sins through Christ. "The Gospel is, strictly speaking, the promise of forgiveness of sins and justification because of Christ." ("Apology" IV:43, p. 113.) There can be no doubt that the justifying faith embraces this forgiveness and as such is the ground, source and power of a new life, since "when a man believes that his sins are forgiven because of Christ . . . this personal faith . . . regenerates us and brings us the Holy Spirit, so that we can finally obey God's law." ("Apology", IV:45, p. 113.) In other words, if we really believe and accept the forgiveness of our sins, we shall be born to a new life, and experience the power of the gospel. If this is not the case, i.e., "if good works do not follow, our faith is false and not true", to quote from Luther's Smalcald Articles. (III: XIII, p. 315.)

In view of the need of a renewal of our inter-Lutheran relations, especially, but not exclusively, at the local level, I am personally convinced that such a renewal will take place only when the gospel of the forgiveness of our own sins and the faith with which we embrace it, impels and encourages us to acknowledge and forgive mutually where we have failed in our interrelationships. Often we have caused pain to each other without really knowing it, due to the lack of communication. But as we approach the stage of dialog, we become aware of the fact that we have offended our brethren. I cannot but recall the call of Christ that comes to us through the words of the Sermon on the Mount: "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matt. 5:23-24) Paraphrasing this personally for our situation: if we as

Lutheran churches and communities in Latin America wish to continue offering our service to God in order that the power of his gospel may assert itself on this continent, we are challenged again by the call of Christ to seek to establish a full fraternal fellowship in our divided confessional family so that we may be enabled to minister as effectively as we would want on behalf of our Lord in our milieu.

As an example of how this call of Christ may be answered in our world of separated churches, I would like to quote the following words which Pope Paul VI addressed to the non-Catholic observers during his opening message to the second session of the Second Vatican Council: "If we are in any way to blame for that separation, we humbly beg God's forgiveness and ask pardon too of our brethren who feel themselves to have been injured by us. For our part, we willingly forgive the injuries which the Catholic Church has suffered, and forget the grief endured during the long series of dissensions and separations."<sup>6</sup>

Another answer to this same call of the Lord was given at the Fifth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, Evian, France, July, 1970 through a statement adopted on the occasion of the presence of the Roman Catholic observers. It is at the same time an answer to the above-mentioned words of Paul VI. The statement referred to, after quoting the biblical commandment of speaking the truth in love, which commits us to acknowledge the problems and differences still existing between Catholics and Lutherans "in the evaluation of the Reformation and tensions in church practice in various parts of the world", goes on to say: "It is also in accordance with this commandment of truth and love that we as Lutheran Christians and congregations be prepared to acknowledge that the judgment of the Reformers upon the Roman Catholic Church and its theology was not entirely free of polemical distortions, which in part have been perpetuated to the present day.

We are truly sorry for the offense and misunderstanding which these polemic elements have caused our Roman Catholic brethren. We remember with gratitude the statement of Pope Paul VI to the Second Vatican Council in which he communicates his plea for forgiveness for any offense caused by the Roman Catholic Church. As we together with all Christians pray for forgiveness in the prayer our Lord has taught us, let us strive for clear, honest, and charitable language in all our conversations."<sup>7</sup>

#### IV

At the Fifth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation the representatives of Lutheranism witnessed an encouraging manifestation of the new relations

<sup>6</sup> Xavier Rynne, *The Second Session* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), p. 358.

<sup>7</sup> *Sent Into The World: Proceedings of the Fifth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), pp. 156-157.



existing between their confessional family and the Roman Catholic Church. The Executive Board of the Federation had extended to Cardinal Jan Willebrands, President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church, an invitation to deliver a speech on the very theme of the Assembly, "Sent into the World". The fact that this invitation was accepted, and the speech delivered by this high Catholic dignitary, is an exemplary indication of how our still divided churches can practice what Luther in the Smalcald Articles calls "mutuum colloquium et consolatio fratrum",<sup>8</sup> i.e., the fraternal conversation that encourages our faith in the gospel and enables us to fulfill our mission. In fact, the cardinal made a valuable contribution to the work of the Lutheran Assembly on a topic that is common to all the Christian churches: the mission we have been entrusted with by God, in spite of our differences and divisions.

This being so, we are called to feel a fraternal responsibility for our brethren, separated though they may be, with regard to their share of the total mission of Christ. In this spirit, let us listen to the words of Cardinal Willebrands, who says: "Can our two traditions help each other, can they allow themselves to be helped in their joint service for the gospel . . . ? Such mutual help would surely be a very promising way to the re-creation of our lost unity. After all, this service would spur us to tackle our important worldly tasks in a more conscious manner and would thereby free us from quite a few historical controversies . . . If together we can give form to the Christian mission in the world, then we will also find in this mission a forceful impetus toward our full unity in Christ."<sup>9</sup>

The presence of Cardinal Willebrands was truly appreciated by the delegates attending the Assembly "as an encouragement to strive further toward that fellowship required by our churches for their common mission and service in the world."<sup>10</sup>

The scattered and divided Lutheran communities in Latin America can be inspired by these statements, since they allow us to place the search for a greater fellowship among us in a Christian perspective of mutual fraternal service. I think that I am not wrong when I express the feeling that we are in need of each other in order to encourage and, given the opportunity, to better one another in the recognition and fulfillment of the tasks assigned to us. Let us remember what Christ said about the serving character of the Christian community and authority: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve." (Matt. 20:26-28) And so again we hear the call of the Lord to which we must give an appropriate answer.

<sup>8</sup> "The mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren", "The Smalcald Articles", *Book of Concord*, III: IV, p. 310.

<sup>9</sup> *Sent Into The World*, op. cit., fn. 7, pp. 60 and 65.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 156.



## V

An area in which Latin American Lutherans can and must help each other is the study of what one of the discussions groups of the Fourth American Lutheran Conference in Lima called "the significance of the Reformation in Latin American reality", i.e., the relevancy of its message in the current situation of the continent. The recommendations of the Conference are still valid: "that there be a continuous effort to deepen the understanding of the gospel . . . ; that Latin American reality be studied . . . ; that a true dialog be held with the other Christian churches and . . . also between the Church and the world."<sup>11</sup> Briefly, we must consider ourselves again as disciples of the gospel, as the pupils of Jesus Christ, now, in our present situation, even as did the reformers in the past in face of the demands of their times. From its very beginnings, Lutheranism has interpreted itself to be a movement of renewal in the understanding of the gospel. It has its *raison d'être* as far as it contributes to a renewed vision of the gospel for our time, and, in our particular case, for the Latin American situation.

## VI

As the realities of Latin America are discussed and the contributions of the Christian churches are considered, it is asked what theological meaning must be ascribed to the terms, "liberation" and "humanization", which are so frequently used at present. The term, "liberation", has come to mean the process by which the dependent and oppressed people seek full self-realization and human dignity in the cultural, political, social and economic order. It was Cardinal Willebrands who at the Evian Assembly pointed out that the "dignity of man is particularly characterized by his freedom",<sup>12</sup> underscoring at the same time the fact that Luther in his "Christian Liberty" has characterized the gospel as the source from which freedom emerges.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Luther was able to explain justification by faith alone, the "articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae", in terms of our liberation.

In his Small Catechism, Luther interprets Christ's redeeming work to be the liberation of man, "a lost and condemned creature . . . from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death . . .". However, Luther's thinking of our "liberation", contrary to the popular way of thinking, does not end here. Luther goes on to say that Christ did all this in order that the believer "may be his, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness . . .".<sup>14</sup> Luther thus attributes an unequivocal purpose to the liberation of man through Christ. Christ makes

<sup>11</sup> *Ekklesia*, op. cit., fn. 5, IX, No. 20-21, December 1965, p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> *Sent Into The World*, op. cit., fn. 7, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> Luther's explanation of the second article of the Apostles' Creed, *Book of Concord*, op. cit., fn. 4, p. 345.

us part of his domain, putting us under his rule, in order that all those who have been liberated may become servants of the Lord of all things, who himself had come to serve and not to be served. To this fundamental christological truth, which is at the same time so very Christian, paradoxical as it may seem, Luther devoted his treatise on "Christian Liberty".<sup>15</sup>

The reformer expounds in this treatise an interpretation of the gospel of our justification, according to which the believers are united with Christ through faith, who on his part makes them partake of his glory and prerogatives as the Son of God, in order that they, having been freed from the need of self-justification, may share his freedom to serve the neighbor. They have been liberated to reflect Christ's love for man.

In the above-mentioned treatise, Luther has pointed out three ways to practice this Christian liberty as disciples of Christ: a) the self-discipline of the believer with regard to his own desires and concerns, so that he may respond more fully to the will of the Lord;<sup>16</sup> b) helping the neighbor in his physical needs;<sup>17</sup> —in this context, Luther coined his famous phrase that in his relations with others, the believer should be like a "little Christ", giving of himself even as Christ has done the same; and c) our identification with the sins as well as with the religious and spiritual shortcomings of others; the vicarious atonement of Christ reflected in us. Or in the words of Luther: "I should lay before God my faith and my righteousness that they may cover and intercede for the sins of my neighbor which I take upon myself and labor and serve in them as if they were my very own." As Luther concludes: "This is true love and the genuine rule of a Christian life. Love is true and genuine where there is true and genuine faith."<sup>18</sup>

In this passage, it is obvious that for Luther the greatest manifestation of Christian love is not yet present when "I deliver my body to be burned", nor when "I give away all I have" to feed the poor, nor when "I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge" about the gospel in order to teach it "in tongues of man and of angels", to quote from the "treatise" on love that the Apostle Paul has given to us in 1 Corinthians 13. Consequently, the love of Christ reaches its highest point in his disciples when they identify themselves with the deepest needs of their fellow men, namely, the forgiveness of sins and release from guilt. In this identification, the followers of Christ take part in his "christological" mission. Possibly this is the meaning of the call of Christ when he says: "If a man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34) "Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33) Here we have, then, the most disturbing and deepest version of the call of Christ: to give of ourselves.

<sup>15</sup> *Luther's Works*, op. cit., fn. 1, pp. 343-377.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 358-359.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 364-367.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 371.



## VII

It is evident that first of all we ourselves need to be liberated in the foregoing sense, both on the level of our individual Christian lives and on that of our churches. This liberty, on both levels, should find expression in the following ways:

1) We are called upon to think, with sincerity and without theological and historical preconceptions, about the requirements for Christian self-discipline, which would better equip us for the evangelical mission we confess to have in Latin America. We all need to become aware that sacrifice is an indispensable part of this discipline. Here comes to bear also the concept of the "church of the poor"<sup>19</sup> which must become for us a challenge that merits our most serious concern.

2) We need to understand that Christian love "means *active concern for others*", as it was emphasized in the report, "Towards New Styles of Living", of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, Sweden, 1968.<sup>20</sup> It is needless to say that such an active concern for others is not only a Christian prerogative. Quite to the contrary, we could ask ourselves why we have not been more actively concerned for our neighbors in Latin America and their liberation from a situation so full of needs.

3) Moreover, do not those who believe in Jesus Christ have a special privilege to *suffer for and with* their fellow men, e.g., those who perpetrate—and those who suffer under—the acts of injustice and violence in the disturbing and tense situation prevailing at present in Latin America? Pertinent to this challenge are the thoughts of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who in his book on ethics speaks of the vicarious character, not only of the life and work of Christ, but also of that of the Christian.<sup>21</sup> He understood this in terms of taking upon oneself the sins of others, of entering into the guilt of others and of identifying oneself with the sinner

<sup>19</sup> The concept of the "church of the poor", which exercised strong influence in the dissenting reform movements in the 12th century ("pauperes Christi"), has become relevant again in the theological and pastoral discussions as well as in the actions of Christians in all confessions, especially in Latin American Roman Catholicism. Among the documents adopted by the Second Latin American Episcopal Conference at Medellín, Columbia, 1968, there is a paper entitled "Poverty of the Church", in which the following is expressed: "Christ our Savior not only loved the poor, but 'though he was rich, yet he became poor', lived in poverty, centered his mission in the proclamation to the poor, of their liberation and founded his church as a sign of this poverty among men . . . The church in Latin America, within the existing conditions of poverty and underdevelopment of the continent, senses the urgency to translate this spirit of poverty into action, attitudes and norms which make her a more lucid and clear sign of her Lord . . . The poverty of the church and of its members in Latin America must be a sign and a commitment; a sign of the incalculable value of the poor in the eyes of God, a commitment of solidarity with those who suffer . . . For all this we want the church of Latin America to be the evangelist of the poor and identified with them, being a witness of the value of the treasures of the kingdom and the humble servant of all men of our peoples." The statement goes on to say that the pastors and the members of the people of God are to respond with their lives and words, their attitudes and their work, to the demands of the gospel and to the needs of the Latin American people. (Translated by the author from the official Spanish text, as published under the title "La Iglesia en la actual transformación en América Latina a la luz del concilio", Vol. II [Conclusiones], Buenos Aires, 1968, pp. 209-210.)

<sup>20</sup> *The Uppsala 68 Report* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), p. 88.

<sup>21</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Macmillan, 1955). Cf. the chapter on "The Acceptance of Guilt", pp. 209-210.

in love. Thus we could lose eventually our standing in the eyes of men, in the same way that Christ lost his on the occasion of his baptism (Matt. 3:14-15) and in the course of his messianic ministry (e.g., Mark 2:15-17).

If Christian solidarity in the sense suggested above, is implied in the new life that emerges from the gospel, it is indeed obvious that Christian faith cannot exist without love. But neither can there be a true Christian love without the faith in Christ that forgives and justifies us. In other words, even though we must grow in showing love in our lives (which cannot but follow true faith), there is no doubt that, likewise and first of all, we must grow also in true faith, in order that the new life of Christ's love may be manifested increasingly in us.

### VIII

The problem of the *humanization* of man and his world cannot be in any way foreign to those who believe that Jesus Christ is the manifestation and embodiment of the true man in our history. He is not merely an isolated historical example for us to follow, but rather a permanent reality that influences history and is actualized through the Holy Spirit. From the point of view of this basic evangelical conviction, the liberated man is not the free man as such, but rather the man who is liberated to serve others and suffer for them vicariously. Professor Heinz Eduard Tödt pointed out in his address at the Evian Assembly that Jesus, according to the story of the temptation (Matt. 4:1-11), rejects all the tempter's proposals for a humanization of the world apart from an obedient faith in God and his word and from the way of suffering. As Professor Tödt stated: "Jesus rejects this. All of the self-help, power and glory of man will only bring forth a satanic world, if in its midst this one thing does not remain: the life of sacrifice for others, of suffering with one's neighbor which brings us closer to him, even closer than any common action. In going to the cross, Jesus accepted God's will, because productivity, self-realization, joy are all in vain, if at the center of the world there would not be the vicarious suffering which frees man from the bonds with which he is tied to himself and also from the coercion of activity."<sup>22</sup>

With regard to the humanization of man and his world, these words may open up for us a new understanding of the gospel of the suffering Christ who justifies us. The call of Christ to the discipleship of the gospel is intensified once more, it being understood that our world will not be humanized if the power of the gospel does not make us willing to take upon ourselves the sufferings and sacrifices of others. As Professor Tödt said with reference to the global situation: "Responsibility for the world, which arises from faith, will be guided by true compassion. It will struggle toward the end that suffering in this world be lessened by every means at the disposal of modern man, and that the willingness to serve as Jesus' disciples be extended throughout the world."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Sent Into The World*, op. cit., fn. 7, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.



## The Gospel and our Mission

### I. Mission as a dimension of the gospel

There is an intrinsic relationship between the gospel and mission. This is not only shown by the New Testament texts that speak to us expressly about the sending of the disciples, but it results as well from the very nature of the gospel, which is the proclamation of an event that has universal validity and universal implications. It is the action of God on behalf of all men, and therefore it cannot remain hidden and mute, but has to be announced and spread. This is a task that belongs to the disciples who are called, sent and equipped by the saving act of God in Christ. The universality of the gospel demands mission of, and confers a mandate upon those who are its bearers. In addition, the gospel wherever it is accepted and believed transforms man, giving him a new life direction and involving him in new service. It is for this reason that genuine faith will always be accompanied by a task, that is to say, an obligation to specific mission of which the gospel is the only norm and motivation for its accomplishment. In summary, we can say that the gospel is socially relevant and thus privatism and quietism are alien to it.

In harmony with these theses, there is a growing conviction today that mission is not merely one function of the church among many others, but rather it is the core of its very existence. An 'evangelical' church is by its nature a missionary church. Faced with a tradition whose characteristics have not infrequently been a peculiar introversion and a passive self-sufficiency on the part of the church, this new concept undoubtedly means an openness to the future, a leaving of the ghetto, and making the community a dynamic one. It is incompatible with the essence of the church that a congregation withdraws and forms an exclusive club viewing the drama of history from the sidelines and with a spectator's attitude. We are probably not exaggerating when we affirm that a profound reflexion about the role of the church in society has begun to take place in almost all countries, with Evian being one of the milestones in this process.

All things considered, the new attempt to define the Christian mission in the world presents not only an encouraging side, but also a problematic one. The frequency and intensity with which the mission of the church is discussed in recent days is also symptomatic of the crisis. The role which we are to play in today's world is not universally agreed upon and attempts to define this role create strong tensions. The discussions concerning the controversy about Pôrto Alegre as the site of the Fifth Assembly of the LWF is a typical

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example. It brought to light a high degree of uncertainty and doubt as to what the Lutheran churches are called upon to do in concrete political and social situations. It would be a mistake to minimize this crisis and see in it something only peripheral and superficial, because if we are honest we would have to confess that the gospel itself is at stake. If we were in a position to say with absolute certainty just what the gospel is for our day, then we would also be able to define our mission clearly. In seeking to fulfil our mandate we are forced to return to the sources from which we as Christians live without being able to escape an investigation of the gospel from the point of view of its applicability to the present and its relevance in practical matters. The indissoluble bond between gospel and Christian mission leads us to discover the depth of the dimension of the debate about our mission and in such a way that our point of departure has to be the evangelical foundation upon which our action is based, and which nowadays is obviously no longer the common premise even of the Lutheran Church.

Even if the unity of the church may be threatened by a plurality of concepts and a certain helplessness characterizes the crisis that was mentioned, we ought not, however, to look at it as a clear sign of bankruptcy or as a fatal illness of the church, since it is possible that this crisis is ushering in a new day. In any case, it shows the solidarity of the church with a world momentarily shaken by the impact of a radical questioning of traditional values and by the dogged search for new forms of coexistence, for new social structures and a new faith that will be able to resist the fire of unrelenting criticism. The church has nothing at its disposal that would immunize it against infection by the bacillus of international crisis, showing very clearly to what extent it is integrated with this world in every way. It would be very strange indeed if the restlessness and bewilderment of contemporary generations did not affect the church and its members.

Whether we welcome the insight that the church has solidarity with the world, or whether we suffer under it, it may protect us from the danger which the all too strong reaction of the failures of the past may conjure up and which expresses itself in an exaggerated theology of mission. This theology takes a position which transcends the world, although one does not wish to leave the world completely to its own devices, and perpetuates a basic dichotomy between church and world. The relationship between these two terms ought to be described as one of constant confrontation and challenge. In view of this we must insist that we are not ambassadors who have arrived from another planet, not the owners of infallible prescriptions that will be quick to cure the ills of our times. We are part of this human society and have contributed in our own way to its complexity. The renewing power of the gospel remains hidden beneath the form of the cross. For that reason when we talk about our mission, what becomes us is the modesty of those who, even though they are saved by the grace of God, are still conscious of their solidarity with the whole



creation that groans and suffers under the yoke of vanity and yearns for the revelation of the glorious freedom of the children of God (cf. Rom. 8:18 ff).

From what we have said, it is clear that we methodologically differentiate the question concerning the significance of the gospel for the world and the question of its significance for the existence of the church which is bound to the world, although these two never dare be separated. Where our attention is directed exclusively to the problem of what the gospel has to say to today's world, that is to say where we concentrate exclusively on the public efforts of the gospel, we run a serious danger: the gospel will be understood as therapy for human ailments, as a critical element in the face of abuses of power and unjust social structures, but it leaves aside the question as to how the gospel will be able to give form to the Christian's life together in the midst of conflict and in our imperfect society. We emphasize too onesidedly the radiating effect of the gospel "outwardly". Naturally, there also exists the converse danger, met everywhere, of giving excessive weight to the internal effects of the gospel in the church. In that case the public character of the gospel is denigrated. It serves simply, then, to guarantee the existence of the church on the margin of society without recognizing that Christians are responsible for the affairs of the world.

Without doubt the second of these two dangers has been the most prevalent in the history of the church. This does not justify, however, that we today fall into the opposite extreme, for the gospel, properly interpreted, is directed towards the entire world but is also constitutive for the fellowship of believers. Being careful not to fall into false alternatives, we ought to strive for a synthesis that will allow us to avoid both dangers. We will be able to define our mission in keeping with the gospel only insofar as we do this conscious of our solidarity with the world. Such a consciousness will keep us, on the one hand, from making a useless attempt at separating ourselves from society and it will keep us from presenting ourselves, on the other hand, as almighty physicians who leave the patient, after the diagnosis or even after the cure, to his individual destiny. There is nothing that can exempt us from our obligation to discover and develop new Christian life styles in our world. This also is a part of our mission.

In accordance with what we have said thus far, it is clear that it is just as inadmissible to speak about the gospel without mission as it is for the New Testament to speak about the indicative without the imperative. The difficulty that we feel when we are called upon to describe our mission has one of its most important roots in the fact that the gospel is not a complex of eternal unchangeable truths or precepts fixed once and for all, but rather the news of an event, the relevance of which must be rediscovered anew for us and for our age. A theorem of geometry, once it has been demonstrated, can be applied mechanically. Not so with the gospel. It demands of us a response that is not the same thing as a simple rational or emotional assent, and does

not relieve us of our responsibility before the truth. It challenges our will, it places us within the world, at the focal point of confusion and crises, compelling us to sober reasoning, commitment and love. The human response to the saving call of God and Jesus Christ is a complex phenomenon. For this reason, the determining and carrying out of our mission is not an easy undertaking and we need to discuss it.

In the following considerations we should think first about the mission of the individual and then go on to the mission of the congregation.

## II. Christian discipleship

In spite of the fact that the term "discipleship", as a description of the elementary features of the Christian, has an extremely solid biblical basis, it can lead, in today's language to misunderstandings. It can mislead us into seeing Jesus Christ as nothing more than a teacher or an example who is to be imitated by his followers. However, this does not correspond fully to the biblical context. Although the idea of imitating Christ is not unknown in the New Testament, the function of the Master is in no way exhausted by the establishment of an ideal which is to be imitated by his disciples. If this were not so, the gospel would not be anything more than a new law. It is important that the common Christian concept of Jesus as Savior and Redeemer not only furnishes his disciples with instruction but in the broadest sense also gives them newness of life.

Taken literally, the term "disciple" therefore expresses only one facet of the Christian existence. It needs clarification on the basis of the total biblical concept. The disciple of Jesus Christ is the man who has been justified, liberated and who has received grace. What is more, the term "disciple" possesses a distinctive and highly significant component: the disciple is he who is involved in a learning process. If one analyzes the corresponding texts in the New Testament, one would come to understand that the disciples not only learn constantly from their Master, listening to him and asking him questions, but that the Master himself teaches them to learn. It is not enough just to take in the words of Jesus as such and to reproduce them mechanically on other occasions. It is exactly for this reason that Jesus expects independent judgment on the part of his disciples. What is more, he draws attention to phenomena in nature that serve as parables of certain truths about the kingdom of God. The disciples are invited to learn from even the unjust and the "children of this world", as in the case of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1 ff). They are also called upon to recognize the signs of the time so that they can react fittingly. Consequently the learning process in which the Christian is engaged dare not be conceived of too narrowly. We cannot, however, conceive that the Christian learning process has as its sole object the Bible and church tradition. The world, in the form in which it confronts us, the negative features as well as the positive, cannot be omitted when we talk about the instructional



material of the Christian. The unworldliness and isolation of the church which we so often deplore, finds one of its roots in our lack of capacity for paying attention to that which goes on around us. In consequence, we offer solutions for problems which do not exist, or advice and counsel that is utopian and unrealistic. We would not be wrong in maintaining that the Christian's capacity for learning is frequently underdeveloped. Yet it is exactly they who ought to be in a position to make a level-headed and objective analysis of reality, to retain the good, to choose what is pertinent and usually react correctly to the challenges of our time.

In a deeper sense, the learning process which the disciple of Christ is to undergo includes two directions that are apparently in opposition, but which nevertheless form a paradoxical unity. The first direction is a centripetal movement. Jesus gathers his disciples, he summons them to live henceforth as a circle whose center is himself. This means, up to a certain point, the cutting of ties that bind his followers to their social, natural, cultural and religious milieu, and the creation of a new group that has different rules of conduct and a new orientation. This life in fellowship with Jesus Christ and under his lordship is qualitatively different than the former life. It can be called eschatological, which is to say that the disciple lives in expectation of God's advent and that the prevenient manifestations of this advent, embodied in the person of Jesus Christ and in the action of the Holy Spirit, have reached and affected him. In this gathering activity, the disciple learns to see the world (which includes his own person) in the light of the final judgment, and he experiences the grace of that God whose desire is not to destroy the wicked, but rather to give him unmerited life.

On the basis of the foregoing, we can say with justification that living as a Christian means separation from the world, in a certain way; and in any case that it is inconceivable without a certain critical distance from that world. The difficulty in basing Christian responsibility over against the world on the Bible is rooted in the fact that New Testament ethics is eschatological in nature. It does not aim directly toward the preservation of this world, but rather anticipates, even though imperfectly, the coming of God's new world. This new world is not just an improved edition of the old one; both worlds although not irreconcilable in principle are so in fact. Thus the temptation arises to categorize Christianity as being at enmity with the world, and to accuse Christians of fleeing from the world. Although this is not entirely accurate, as we shall seek to show shortly, one cannot deny that from the Christian viewpoint, belief in progress and naive optimism do place substantial barriers in the way. The assertion that the Christian is freed for a new obedience would be hollow if it did not axiomatically assume that the old and the new worlds were irreconcilable. We simply cannot eliminate eschatology from our creed without running the risk of losing the liberty which is granted to us in Jesus.

The second constitutive direction of Christian discipleship is at the same time supplementary to and corrective of the first. Here one deals with expansion that could almost be a centrifugal motion. Christ sends his disciples into the world. Far from being a band of the faithful living on an island of the blessed, they are sustained in order to remain in the world and in fact to become very deeply involved in it. Discipleship has to be tested in everyday reality, even as Jesus himself did not circumvent the realities of this world. It is possible that the attacks of injustice, hatred and evil may be experienced more intensively in following Jesus than anywhere else.

Therefore we conclude that the call of Jesus Christ does not break the natural solidarity of all men, even when it summons us to participate in the eschatological people of God. The Christian remains, although in a new way, a member of his nation, of society and a child of his age. The Jew remains a Jew, the Greek a Greek. But the fact of being sent into the world means more, because it means that the disciple, in his natural solidarity with the world, has to search for a conscious solidarity. Solidarity is the act of identifying oneself with the just needs and concerns of the neighbor, the acknowledgment of fellowship, a defense of his interests and the helping of him in his needs. Christ's "law" is love. And this love does not permit enmity against the world to arise. While we previously spoke of the particular distance that the Christian must maintain over against the world, we must now underline that it is this world which is not what it ought to be that is the object of God's love. An identification with the world, without reserve, is surely not possible, since God loves the sinner, not sin. In spite of this, love demands a commitment to the world. The love of God which took shape in Christ is a critical love, unable to accept the world as it is but equally unable to unmercifully condemn it. This is the dialectic of God's judgment and love so much in evidence in the action and preaching of Jesus. In the behavior of the disciple it implies a withdrawing from the world and solidarity with it at one and the same time.

It is absolutely necessary to maintain an exact equilibrium between these two directions. A discipleship without this gathering activity will hardly provide the necessary equipment for its mission in the world and would be in danger of becoming pure activism. In such a case, a person ceases to be, inevitably, Christ's disciple and uses his name as a mere tag for alien merchandise. He gives his Christian liberty in exchange for a criticism that is suspect and cannot really get rid of its ideological or pathological chains. On the other hand, where one refuses to become involved in the world, we are confronted with the opposite danger. Here, the gospel is transformed into an esoteric doctrine which is reserved for the few elect and which must be given low marks as to its practical value. It now actually brings about an enmity of the world, which in fact denies the love of God. Such a withdrawal from the world will inevitably be paid for by the church in a new form of babylonian captivity. We can thus say in summary that the gathering of the disciples is a prerequisite for their mission and that mission is the logical consequence of their being called together. As Chris-



tians we live between justification and the resurrection. Only as the resurrected will we be taken out of the world and relieved of our mandate. However, as long as the resurrection lies before us we live as justified persons in this world, proclaiming the marvels of God and anticipating his coming kingdom through new obedience.

### III. The mission of the congregation

Not only the individual Christian, but also the congregation as a whole, is the bearer of this missionary mandate. We still have to make a distinction, since we cannot automatically assume that the individual mission and the collective mission coincide completely. How should we define the function of the congregation and church, since the church is nothing more than the Christian community present in the local congregation, and the local congregation is nothing more than the form in which the church appears which has Jesus Christ as its head.

The existence of the congregation results from that gathering activity that we have spoken about. It is the result of Jesus' calling his disciples together and his joining to himself sinners who have received grace. The congregation is necessary because the word of the gospel does not place man in isolation but in community. As an entity which in addition to this possesses a purely secular form, the congregation, like any other group or society, requires structures and organization.

However, we have seen of late a certain aversion to the congregation as institution precisely on the part of those who wish to remain faithful to their mission. Motivated by a strong dissatisfaction with the defects and inefficiency of the institutionalized church, the people with this aversion seek new forms and new methods of working. They either disassociate themselves completely from the church or they evidence clear indifference over against it. Despite the fact that this dissatisfaction is understandable, and reflects a legitimate concern, it does contain in its radical forms an expression of serious dangers. It can lead to an individualistic missionary approach that becomes self-sufficient, increasing fruitless rivalry in the field of mission, and causing the success or failure of this mission to depend too much on the charismatic qualities of the individual. One asks, on this basis, whether circumventing the organized church is not perhaps too easy a way, once one has turned aside from the arduous task of coordinating efforts or entering into true dialog. The mortal danger of the implementation of the missionary mandate alongside the existing church, which is itself in need of a reformation from head to foot, resides in subjectivism and individualism which is no longer capable of relating to the community or of enduring the tensions which are inevitable in the larger fellowship.

On similar grounds we must also reject the conception which seeks to discover the institutional church *in actu*. Here, disaffection over against the institutional church expresses itself in another way. According to this thesis, the congregation

exists only in the moment in which the gospel is materialized in the diaconic action of Christians. The dynamic aspect, without doubt inherent in the concept of the Christian congregation, is sharpened to such a point that one cannot speak about a true existence of the church. The congregation does not exist: it happens. Still, community without continuity and stability is unthinkable. What is more, the effects of the word of God cannot be atomized, as if it were only a flash of lightning incapable of creating a new existence. We have, in the concept referred to, a classic example of false alternatives. The correct insights are abused in that moment when they are absolutized.

In a paradoxical way and sharply contrasting to this obvious aversion to the institutional church is the stance which expects amazing things from this reviled institution. One demands that the church leaders speak a clear word on the burning issues of our day and expects the institution as such to engage itself politically, even to the point of sacrificing itself, and one flippantly accepts public declarations in church periodicals as the criteria for determining the degree of maturity in the church. What is the concept of the church that lies behind such demands? Frequently one does not take into account the urgency which such a way of posing the question illustrates.

The Christian congregation is not just simply the sum of its members, since it is Christ who calls the body into being and who manifests himself in a great variety of gifts. For that reason, the responsibility of the congregation cannot be delegated to certain ecclesiastical representatives. Whoever calls the church (in this case, the institution together with its representative organs) the norm and measure of what the community of Christ is, has departed necessarily from the biblical foundation. This does not mean that the church has no need of leadership, but the leadership can never be substituted for the direct responsibility of all the members. Patriarchalism is so dangerous because it impedes the maturation of the Christian, excludes the possibility of divergence of opinion between the members and the leaders of the church, and delegates the mission that is the responsibility of all upon a small group of elite. Naturally, it is inevitable and just, to a certain point, that leadership circles make vicarious decisions and initiate programs on behalf of congregations and that they speak in their name. Nevertheless, these decisions cannot take on such an authoritarian character that they simply suffocate the voice of other members. In the last analysis it is the task of the church leaders to awaken the congregations to their own responsibilities.

I like to think that the congregation in its institutional form has two purposes: in the first place, the equipping of the congregation by community training, and, in the second place, the training and equipping of the individual member for his mission. That the gathering together and the missionary mandate require each other has already been said. However, I do want to emphasize that I am not in any way trying to promote the thesis that only the individual can carry out the Christian mission, groups are also called to carry out specific missions. The



division of labor, planning and common action on the part of groups correspondingly prepared is therefore quite natural if the church as a whole can take action. Even so, the primary purpose of the institutional church consists in addition to its enabling of the congregational life in motivating, demanding and organizing the Christian mission. The church is no longer worthy of its name if individuals monopolize its missionary mandate. It will be able to develop missionary strength in the degree to which it is successful in sharing its mandate and encouraging its implementation.

There is no doubt as to the fact that it will be necessary to base our concept of the congregation on a new theological foundation if we are to reach the objectives indicated. Renewal of the church, so much desired by everybody, is not just a question of structures, since these are almost always the expression of the current theology or ideology. In the past, a concept that was too pastoral made the active cooperation of the lay members impossible, brought about a fatal isolation of theology, which divorced itself from the world of experience and favored the existence of that which we may call the "served community". It is important to rediscover the charismatic dimension of God's people, so that there may be joint action, true presence of the church in all sectors of secular life through the church's members, and a penetration into the world in such a way that the church switches from the defensive to the offensive. In order for this to happen, the lack of communication between theologians and lay people has to be overcome. One has long heard the desire expressed that theologians should become more human. Only in this way will the disastrous dualism of world of faith and world of reality be overcome. The primary places for Christian mission are to be found in front of our doors. They are the professions, social life, marriage, politics, and every sort of problem which we all meet in one way or another every day.

This concept, which is in no sense new, is a program for the realization of which we ought finally to engage with all our strength. Naturally, this implies structural reform, considerable theological effort and, above all, the placement of a much higher value upon the laity. For that reason I have to point out one consequence that often escapes notice. Precisely there where pluralism is consciously affirmed, we find also the greatest demands placed upon our capacity to love the differentness of our neighbor. Such love will not withdraw from dialog, but will be careful with its judgments—a stance which unfortunately has not usually been the strength of the churches. The fascinating feature of a hierarchical or pronouncedly pastoral church consists in the fact that it can appear monolithic with relative ease. But uniformity, for the most part, is purchased at the price of a fiction and suppresses the life of the congregation. What is more, we have to ask ourselves seriously whether uniformity, maintained at all costs, will be able to respond to today's multiple challenges. In a world that is more diversified with every passing day and which continually confronts us with new problems, Christianity has need of many kinds of reactions. It must remain flexible in a way that I like to defend as "missionary pluralism". This does not mean blessing

each and every position, but rather approving that diversity in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, which according to I Cor. 12 is typical of the body of Christ. Will we be able to maintain, in spite of this, our visible unity? That is one of the cardinal questions of the future.

#### IV. Theses regarding mission as based on the gospel

In this last chapter, I must trace some of the consequences of earlier themes, with a special eye on our Latin American context. We are in imminent danger of being engulfed by the great quantity of tasks that we have. It is at this point that the need arises for establishing priorities and for careful planning. We cannot do everything. As minority churches we have clearly defined limits and we do not throw around the weight that some of us sometimes dream about. Still, we can do much. Along these lines, it therefore seems to me necessary that we should take note of the following:

1) In the *motivation as well as the implementation of our mission*, the doctrine of justification plays a decisive role. The offer of free justification by God poses for man the decisive question of his existence, to what, where or from what he derives his own value and the reason for his existence—all of which includes the question of what meaning his life has. In society in general, the law of works is in force. Man is judged, classified and held in esteem according to what he produces, represents and is. In contrast, justification by grace confers upon man the justification for his existence without requiring achievements from him or without his needing to bring proof of his worth. Wherever this is taken seriously, the hierarchically-structured society must cease. Certainly the natural differences among man ought not to be leveled off. However, the extensive scale of values is destroyed and only then does the community of people with differences become possible.

It seems to me that we are still a long way from having discovered the practical implications of justification by faith. Why, for example, do we seldom attempt to express our concern about human dignity and human rights in categories of justification? The purely humanistic conception which seeks to discover the value of man in man himself is in contrast to the New Testament which states that mankind because of its sin has lost its dignity. But God confers new dignity on man when he justifies him by grace. This means that Christ did not come to confirm a human dignity that already existed, but rather that he came to give back a dignity that had been lost. For this reason human dignity is not violated where men suffer injustices, but rather where men practice injustices. Man through acts of violence does not defile his neighbor but only himself. This means, however, that at the same time, the dignity which God gives to our neighbor constantly places limitations upon our actions. Although every attempt to interfere with the rights and dignity of someone else remains only an attempt we do here infringe upon what is God's, which according to the New Testament is the basic sin of man. The differences between this and the humanistic concept



may be only seen in nuances. They are significant, however, since they in all probability are based upon a far more realistic view of man. Justification through grace makes an apotheosis of both the powerful and the impotent impossible from the outset. Christianity and humanism can go together a good stretch of the way, but the crossroads will come, at which point the Christian, it seems to me, must follow his own and more aggressive pattern.

The doctrine of justification speaks with a critical voice in a society which has institutionalized the existence of hierarchical class structures and which usually measures according to inadequate models. In this situation the church will have to raise its voice—and that not only in the form of verbal testimony but also in the form of a concrete and exemplary putting into practice of that which it knows on the basis of the gospel. The congregation is, *par excellence*, the place where justification by grace and faith ought to take on concrete features. Christians are called upon to adopt a scale of values different from the pertaining one.

2) The justification of the sinner is a miracle of God's love. For that reason the *forms of our mission* can be dictated only by the measure of love. This love, if it is authentic, will be inventive and creative; it will use its imagination in finding those forms of help and service that are most efficient. The object of this love will be each and every man in need.

In our country, as in other Latin American countries, the need appears in its most compelling form as lack of education, poverty, hunger, etc. The growing misery of our rural communities and the outer belts of our cities must come in for special mention. Here we see a vast field for carrying out our mission which, any way you look at it, cannot escape the need for members and for the church's official organs to become involved at a political level. The church can no longer refuse to take up the cause for the rights of the poor, for we cannot refuse to notice that the salvation of man consists not only in the saving of his soul. However, at the same time we are equally aware that the problem is not solved either when all of his material needs have been met. Love sees man as a whole, so that mission takes on two forms: witness and service. The situation itself must determine which of these two must have priority. As a basic principle, however, the church must never limit itself to only one of these forms: without action faith is dead, and without faith action, if present at all, is impotent.

But note well: God's love is not directed at the ideal man; on the contrary, it is directed at the imperfect, problem-ridden and rebellious man. One of the weak points of humanism is to be found in the fact that it runs the danger of loving man in the abstract, that is to say, an optimistic ideal. Meantime, what will it say about that man who always enslaves his neighbor anew and defiles his own dignity by injustice and criminal actions? It is fairly easy to speak out in favor of objective goals and the inalienable rights of man (this depends upon the situation), to fight for the humanization of the entire world. We are not underestimating the value of this, but a brother is, after all, more

than a mere spokesman. The mere spokesman for the oppressed will not be inevitably obliged to deal with his neighbor and to experience his frustrations, be these the result of his own deficiency or that of another. God loved the sinner—this is highly significant. However, the church cannot be content to simply follow a cause or a socio-political program and in the process sacrifice man in the concrete upon the altar of an ideal. Such a procedure can be just as inhuman as absolute indifference. However, the alternative of either a purely caritative diaconic effort or an attempt to attack and tear out evil at its roots is false. We must quite simply admit that one is not possible without the other.

Whether the church will recover its missionary impulse will depend, according to the way I see things, essentially on whether or not we are capable of creating models for Christian living and action. We must necessarily seem ridiculous if we insist on giving our opinion, so many times devoid of real knowledge of causes, about the whole complex gamut of social problems. On the other hand, in those fields where we are competent, we may, perhaps, by serious study and unceasing efforts, create something that will merit the respect of our fellow citizens. Our mission will be convincing only if it is not limited to critical functions, but rather if it also shows some constructive energy. Such model projects ought to originate from within the congregations themselves, be sustained by them and be fair reflections of the spirit that prevails in the church. If we could manage this we would be free automatically of our worries about the relevance of the gospel in today's society.

3) In determining and choosing such model projects, the *historical, political context of the congregation* will be of decisive importance. Beyond this, certain model projects will have only regional validity because they are linked inseparably to a given situation. Also for the same reason, the "missionary pluralism" which we postulated, becomes necessary. The church must therefore be open for experimentation. That kind of anxiety which ridicules everything new and is afraid to risk, runs the danger of seeking to domesticate the Holy Spirit. The specific and different contexts in which each congregation finds itself points to the difficulties inherent in resolutions adopted at international conferences. The desire for unanimity and a united front for action is understandable, but we ought to be very clear that resolutions passed at the international level may be of limited value when applied to specific situations in each country. We ought, therefore, to ask ourselves seriously if such generally formulated resolutions ought to be sought unless they are so vague that no one any longer fears being bound by them. Each of us is seen in his own world, a world which cannot arbitrarily be exchanged with another.

4) Upon enquiring into the *objectives of our mission* as a final point, I feel a little embarrassed. Can this question be legitimate? Real love is not effected by ulterior motives. It loves the other, it seeks his well-being, his happiness, his salvation, and not the aggrandizement of the church itself nor the glory of its own person. Simply hunting down proselytes is a corruption of our



mission. We await the kingdom of God not only for ourselves, but for the whole world. The congregation can be the place where this kingdom of God comes about preventively—in fact that is its purpose. However, this kingdom is not to be measured in terms of numbers or statistics. We know that there needs to be a congregation, and yet it is not the final goal of our missionary action. It is rather the instrument of that action, possibly even the image of something to come, and for that reason Christian mission does not exist without community. But it must remain what it is. It stands for the service of the kingdom of God, which is promised for the entire world, and for this reason is provisional. It is a function but is not an end in itself. Membership in a congregation and the building of new congregations are undoubtedly legitimate consequences of our mission, but they are not the basis upon which mission is founded. The basis for our mission is to be found in the offer of God's grace which desires the salvation of man.

## The Gospel and our Action

How can we relate the gospel to action? We can only talk about action if we are fully integrated in the reality of the world in which we live rather than the life of the social and cultural elites of which we are privileged members in the general context of Latin America.

I believe we should be frank at this point and recognize our limitations. However, we must be courageous enough to face the reality of the world which surrounds us; we must try to break down the house of cards we have built for ourselves as a protection from the sin of the society which surrounds us, and we must face up to the reality in which we are both participants and accomplices.

Despite the constant warning not to generalize about Latin America (supposedly because of intra-regional and even intra-national differences), if we consider today's world not as something taking place "outside" us, but rather as something we are intimately involved in, it is possible to detect three areas in which we can consider the situation as a whole, and which I personally believe (since it is a question of faith) must be taken into account when we talk of our action in the world as Christians.

First, let me mention Marx—especially Marx as a young man. I am referring here to his concept of man as the "maker" of history. Humanity has gradually moved away from the situation in which men were mere spectators of history, when they were manipulated for better or worse by those who governed, and when the individual was only a political object under an aristocracy, an oligarchy, or some other sort of regime. The situation now is that men (at least those outside the church, but including some within it) have become aware of the fact that it is *man* who makes history and the insights of Marx, in this sense, constitute vital stimuli in our generation. Hence our leaning towards active participation in politics.

Second, a few words about Nietzsche. For generations we Christians have created a form of religious escapism, both psychic and human, which has resulted in the collective mutilation of men. We must remember, as Nietzsche pointed out (quite rightly), that there is only one value, and that value is man. There is no such thing as absolute good, there is no such thing as an abstract superior "something" to which I must subject myself. The value is man—man in the process of advancement, man who is making himself. This is what we must bear in mind when we talk of making history.

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Third, I want to refer to technology. Both Marx and Nietzsche are projected against the wheels of technology, that formidable apparatus upon which we gaze in wonderment—for example, man's landing on the moon. Man has been able to convert perceptible experience into mathematics, producing equations which today he can manipulate with spectacular results.

In this sense, we are now living in a world which is open to man, and is in fact centered on man, insists upon his value which in turn is validated by his own existence. There are no *a prioris*. Man today finds it difficult to accept axioms such as those offered to him by theology when it argues deductively. In the world today we can no longer, as before, place God as the highest axiom, from which we deduce angels and all the rest, through to all the moral, social and economic implications for man.

In a way, the formidable fact that unites us as Christians is our collective failure to act as channels for the gospel in this age in which we have been put to live. We have more or less succeeded in keeping the one little sheep within the fold, but the other 99 are wandering around, lost in the wilderness, while we worry ourselves sick over the one we have remaining. We are not united as Christians by success, nor really by our efforts to promote human development. Christians—and Lutherans among them—in Latin America can justifiably be accused of abetting dehumanization and alienation.

### *The gospel*

In speaking of the gospel and our action, we must first ask a question which seems illogical: what is the gospel? This is like asking: what is capitalism, or what is democracy? To answer, we have to resort to a whole series of affirmations which seem to have fallen out of the blue, taking no account of the historical, political and social context which created the present situation in the first place. It is a response from the past which we have tried to make fit the present.

Consequently, we must ask ourselves what we really understand by "the gospel", and what our task is. At the very least, we must realize that what we have done and are doing means nothing to the masses, and that there are still unsophisticated people who simply use God—in a magical sense—as an answer to psychological need, to release internal tensions.

We have to ask ourselves if we have really led men to full humanity in their discipleship—to live the gospel in all its dimensions. When we examine our concept of the gospel, we are immediately faced with the problem of our understanding of theology—what do we *mean* by theology?

Let me say a few words about this. In all religious activity we seek to make the sacred relevant to today. It is not merely a matter of repeating a rite, but

rather we are convinced that grace (or whatever you wish to call it) is present in man and is actualized in the sacred. There are, I believe, three possible ways of doing this, beginning from the original phenomenon of Christ, to whom the gospel witnesses. This sacralization can be done through the logical means of apologetics. Personally, I do not believe in this method, since human reason is not made for it. The second way is through theology, which consists of penetrating ecclesiastical tradition—passing through all the swamps and bogs which have been or which are to be—in order to reach man. And when that man swallows our denominational pill, we have the effrontery to say that the Holy Spirit has been at work. The third way of actualizing the sacred today consists of the following: in the person and work of Jesus Christ, man's existence was radically changed. Before Christ, man was, as you might say, on a downward path, being consumed by sin which meant his own destruction and that of all around him. After Christ, as a result of the phenomenon of Christ, man has the possibility of being totally fulfilled through love.

This is an ontological concept in the theological approach, about which there is, for those who are interested, any amount of references in the Epistles, and particularly in the Pauline letters. They refer to newness, the new life to which Paul gives so much importance.

I would like to say a little more concerning ontological theology. Theology is not the repetition of what has been said in the past. Yet all of us here have taken one or two approaches: we have either resorted to dogmatics in order to produce somewhat viable solutions, applying them to our pastoral situation, or we have acted simply as imitators of European or North American theological fashions. It is well known that there has never really been a Latin American theology.

But for me, theology has another meaning. As man, or the human being, becomes aware that he exists, that he is existing in the world, he becomes aware of the whole situation of which he is a part, as both participant and accomplice. He begins to realize that he is fatally involved in an evil situation which will destroy him and those around him. From this realization of himself *as man*, not as a Christian, comes the fear that his situation is evil, that the situation determines the life of men. From that fear, man returns to the hope into which he entered at his baptism, he resorts to the original myth, to Jesus Christ who creates the world, and asks himself: what world does Christ create for me? What is the good news?

This event of Christ covers my present situation, the one in which I am living. Thus theology consists of an interpretation which demands realism and sincerity in man's understanding of him. Thus he becomes aware of an evil situation, from which he returns to the phenomenon of Christ. In this double fidelity he is doing theology. Man does theology in loyalty to the Scriptures and to the phenomenon of Christ. If this aspect is missing, we are in the field of humanism.



Man also does theology in fidelity to himself and to his fellow men. If this fidelity to his fellowmen is lacking, what he does will be nothing more than an exegesis, a dogmatism with more or less breadth and success.

It is a question, then, of a double fidelity which we are called to live in our search for the gospel.

We know very well that, in raising questions about faith, the biggest problems arise precisely from the fact that we are dealing with objects which do not belong to the category in which we are trying to classify them. For example, an ashtray cannot be classified in botanical terms; botany deals with other types of objects. Neither can we classify faith, which belongs in the field of ontology, in the field of logic. But it is through logic (by means of the application of thought) that faith shows itself; faith which seeks a way to reach man in creative eagerness and love.

We know that historically we have deduced the gospel from a series of dogmas. When we talk of the gospel, we often say: Well, it means that man repents and is forgiven for his sins. So in one way or another he joins a group of Christians and lives a life which theologically we describe as sanctified. This is more or less what we have really meant by the gospel.

I believe that these are the lines we ought to be thinking along (this is my personal belief, and I try to follow it). Let us go back to the Scriptures. Man faces the tremendous problem that he does not feel as if he is made, but that he is making himself. In that situation, he seeks to become truly human. That Scripture tells us that the purpose of God for men is life, *zoe*; in the old Testament it is *SHALOM*, peace, fullness. God's creative wish for man is that he should be led to a qualitative existence (for want of a better way of expressing it) as a human being, to lead him to a situation in which he is fulfilling himself, in love, and that he should not destroy himself or his fellow men.

Thus we must stop looking at the gospel as something static from the past, taking no account of the things upon which it was based at any particular moment, and trying at all costs to apply it to our time. We must return to *doing* theology, to considering what we can say, beginning from the event of Jesus Christ, about that situation of which we are a part.

In explaining what we understand by the gospel, we begin to see a theological principle which I view with extreme suspicion. We begin deductively. We find a basis for a particular act, and we say, "This is what it is". Then we seek the means of reaching men so that it can become reality. Personally, I have very little confidence in this inductive-deductive method, because what happens is this: we are told: "Look, let's talk about what the Lutheran Church in Latin America is, what Lutherans are doing and not doing, and hence we can

put together a general hypothesis." Thus we reach a series of affirmations—moral, ritual, legal, and political—which attempt to patch things together to make a whole; this seems to me to be very negative theology.

Consequently, although this may be treated as a provisional working hypothesis, I believe that we must really ask what we understand the gospel to be. Is theology a perpetual repetition, or perpetual effort? Is it a constant attempt to apply the past to the present, or is it a retelling of a given historical situation? We cannot solve anything by blaming the Holy Spirit when people refuse to believe.

### *Action*

Now that we have given some thought to the gospel, let us consider the problem of action. Firstly, we can consider it as praxis. We all know that by praxis we mean action preceded by thought. In other words, first we think, then we do, in a determined manner. Christians tend to have some reservations about praxis. We believe that it is the Spirit which works, in some way or another, revealing a certain line of action to us without any clear human analysis. However, many Christians doubt whether that is the road to follow. One thing is certain: there is no shortage of commissions and groups in the church with a tremendous amount of activity, one may even say activism. In order to justify its own existence, the church carries out a great deal of senseless human activity, which in the long run does not even help the survival of the institution itself, even though that is the purpose it is designed for. Thus activism, which we have to a great extent copied from the North American churches, very often leads us in Latin America to very varied working situations, in which the church, instead of growing and emerging due to a whole series of unrelated activities has not really acted as a promoter of faith, but at best as a promoter of the church. In this sense, the church is like a mother who bears children only to devour them.

It is through action—but action beginning from the gospel as incarnation—that we communicate. It is through action incarnate through the gospel that we discover our basic calling as Christians to a conscious and consistent promotion of man as having creative value. It is action, and not words—personally, I do not believe in any argument, whether it be mine or anyone else's, if it is not incarnate in convincing action. The only argument which is valid is the one composed of flesh and bone. All the rest is nothing but a conceptual dance which we must make use of, as humans, but knowing very well that concept is not reality, only an image with which we are playing. It is precisely when we have reached an understanding of the gospel, and have received from it an existential design and direction for life, that man communicates through action. Action always has something to do with the future. In one way, it is the highest expression of faith. We can affirm that the future is unforeseeable, since we cannot know what is going to happen. This is why Merleau Ponty says



that man cannot justify the present at the political level, because politics is an anticipatory science although the future always has that element of the unknown, and this is why, he says, we cannot justify the violence of the powerful, or, if we can, we can also justify the violence of those who oppose them.

In any event, action throws us into great insecurity. Let us take an example. Two sincere men, both loyal to their homeland, are faced with an uncertain future and have to make a decision. One is a member of the resistance, the other a collaborationist in the Second World War. Each chooses how he is going to act. Only the future decides which is right—which is the hero and which the traitor. This is the same sort of insecurity which faces us as we try to act as Christians in our situation. Faced with the tremendous and frightening ambiguity of the future, we have to take the risk of existing, of choosing a type of existence which places itself at risk in the future. However, as we surrender ourselves to action in this way, in spite of all the insecurity, as rational beings we need some sort of certainty. And it is as we search for that degree of security that we usually work out a theology, so that when as a result of our action we find ourselves in prison we can say that we are there because we are Christians and not because we are fools. In other words, we try to base our action intellectually in certain patterns which we formulate in order to be able to act in a certain way. But in reality it is the action which matters in the midst of this ambiguity. Thus we try to find a basis for something which has none, since we are thrown into the world to live, to exist. It is strange to read a biblical passage such as Romans 12, which says: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice . . . that you may prove what is the will of God." Paul says that the Christian goes forth to live as a human being, and that at the end comes the knowledge of the will of God. This is not exactly the road which we usually follow. First we present a series of affirmations which appear to be satisfactory, and of these we say that they are the will of God. And then we say that we put them into practice in our lives, in one way or another. Paul, on the other hand, says that it is through the ambiguity in which we go forth to live that the will of God becomes evident.

In actual fact, we can see a very curious phenomenon; many of us—and I include myself—take action simply as a *reaction*. We react, for example, to non-participation in politics with extreme attitudes. We react against many things, believing that that is action, although in many cases it is nothing more than reaction. If Christ calls us as Christians to make men fully human in history, and not merely economically, then we could truly say that we do not need that reactionary psychological jargon which moves us from one place to another, but rather we need an ontic intentionality of men which manifests itself through action as a creative force, and as love, about which the New Testament has so much to say.

Action has its limitations, as we well know. If we give something to a beggar, the next day several more will come. Then we realize that often individual

action is not enough. We also realize that community action at the local level is in many cases not enough either. When we try to act as men who work on behalf of humanity, we see that we have to work at a different level. We must go from the individual level to the structural, where the problems facing the human being can and must be resolved. Individual action—at least in my personal view—is nothing more than the first step which leads us to a second level of action at the community level. Naturally, the same happens in the Christian community.

Lastly, I believe that we are called to live in the ambiguity of faith, with no security and no roof over our heads to protect us from the storm, and without using God as a crutch to help us over the difficult patches. We are called to exist within an ambiguity in which the future is offered to us as our field of action, because the future is from that moment on. In this field of action, the inscrutable is always present. But we also believe that in some way he who creates possibilities for the church (that something which we have tried to define positively as God and which negatively we guess is something to which we refer as human beings) is immersed in history, in the future, in tomorrow. And that faith that the something acts and with which I act is precisely what gives us the impulse for action, despite the ambiguity and insecurity. I exclude from action all those things which we consider to be "intra-mural". I do not believe that our faith is strengthened or our love kindled while we remain within the church discussing whether or not the church can undertake one or other form of internal action (relationships between church bodies, etc.), claiming that this is action. By action I mean the church recognizing its legitimate and genuine commitment to humanity. (This is also how Dr. Sitompul put it in his presentation this morning.) We are not called to contemplate the house of the people who live opposite us, but rather to lift our eyes and look towards the horizon.

### *The gospel and our action in Latin America*

Despite my limitations, I would like to say something about the question of the gospel and action in Latin America.

I have already discussed the question of "value". This is still the key question. We say that there is a crisis of values, and that values are changing. We must ask what is the value for us in theology. And I am not talking about humanism.

God revealed himself to man through his prophets, he became man, he died for man in order to create a "new man".

Is theology concerned only with God? Not for me. I believe that it concerns man too. Theology is a perspective, a starting point from which we can observe and speak to human beings as such. When we leave this perspective, we enter into the field of pure anthropology. But while we maintain the fact of the



relationship with God who died for man, Jesus Christ, we are in the field of theology, and not of humanism as is often said. In the Scriptures, at least in Genesis, the value is man. We must ask ourselves what is the value which motivates our attitudes and pastoral actions in various situations. It is so often the survival of the institution. How often is it God in abstraction, which we have formulated rationally as individuals, and whom we seek to incarnate or reincarnate in ourselves? It is so often something else other than man! We must affirm the value of men in Christ, men who arise as a result of redemptive action, as a result of the new existential attitude which Christ has created.

From the issue of value comes the burning question: do we live for God or for man? Because for many people God is that repressive force which ties us down, which prevents us from being men, from becoming ourselves, which ties us to an institution, and makes us dependent upon times and places. But for many other people, that God is the antithesis of the God of the Scriptures. He is the God whom we ourselves have created, to the glory of God but for the misfortune of men.

It is in this context that we must ask ourselves whom we are for—God or man? Perhaps we should put it this way: God is for man, as an active organism. In Christ the new creature, man, arises with all his potential, he lifts up his head and moves toward fulfilment—socio-political, economic, religious, and any other type you care to mention.

Is this the image of the Christian? Or is it the man who is bent under the weight of historical morality, which while claiming to be Christian is in fact motivated by all those false things which the churches have tried to present as the motivating forces of human beings?

I believe, then that we must ask ourselves whether our action has really been on behalf of men or if on the contrary it has been untrue to them. This morning we talked about the vocation of man, who is called and who calls. It is suggested to us, beginning with the event of Christ and sometimes with the Christian community, as a proposition concerning the shaping of our existence. Just as I can be a communist or a humanist, it is suggested that I can be a Christian. And it is the living out of that existence which will show me whether it is true or not. There is no lack of examples in the Scriptures.

We must realize that it is a question of *living* a vocation and not *having* a vocation. We are called to exist as agents of light in this world, men on behalf of men, creative human beings.

This is the great problem which faces the church. There is much talk of mission—a somewhat hackneyed word with which we can justify many presuppositions. Mission is not carried out, because it is forced work. We impose the transfer of a conceptual world, which we expect people to accept without a

word. This is the situation in many missions, although perhaps I have put it somewhat crudely. What *should* happen is that men should be encouraged to *live* in Christ, an existence which finds complete fulfilment at all levels of life, and which brings others to say: I too want to live qualitatively as a man, I too want to find the means of existence. To put it another way, life has no meaning unless we give it some. And it is Christ who gives it meaning for us, revealing himself as authentic existence so that we can be men on behalf of men.

As I have already mentioned, in my opinion Christian discipleship means the promotion of man, the total promotion of the human being, and this cannot be produced by the goal but rather by the means. We often give the impression of approaching men from the goal, from the arrival point, telling him with theological arrogance: "Look, this is the answer!"

Man is a being who is related to God. And if our affirmation is true, unless we have walked at his side, our words miss their target. We must be humble to walk alongside man all the way in order to see if there can really be communication.

This discipleship necessarily leads us to a political attitude. If we are on the side of man, we must understand that anything which represses man, either internally or externally, or which tends to destroy the human being as such, is sin. And this must be fought. Discipleship necessarily calls for political commitment. It brings us to the conviction that there is no such thing as neutrality. He who says he is neither left nor right is allowing himself to be used as a cat's paw by the ruling regime. There is no such thing as neutrality. The masses are becoming daily more aware of the fact that neutrality is impossible—you have to be either one thing or the other.

I believe that the Christian is called today to play a tremendously important role in this political vocation. He must say: "Look, gentlemen, the problem of man does not lie in his stomach. It is not a question of a full stomach making a happy heart. It is not true. Man is a complete entity; man is a creative being; in Christ he emerges and forms part of the new humanity which is taking shape." Our contribution to politics, from the point of view of the scriptures, must be through a theological understanding of the emergence of the new man.

In the political field, the greatest problem for Latin America arises out of its relationship to the USA, just as Africa's arises in its relationship to Europe. From the Christian perspective, I believe my attitude should be as follows: Christ had to choose between man and material benefits. When he was tempted on the mountain, he was offered things, but he chose man. For him it was man who had value. In our consumer society, man is not important, man is sacrificed to material things. Those of us who work in pastoral situations know how many people destroy themselves physically, morally and mentally in the scramble for status symbols. In our society, everyone declares that to be a man



means to have possessions. This is the great thesis put forward by the media—press, radio and television—the sign of our times.

Christ, on the other hand, said: "Man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15) For him, life consists of other things. The Christian, then, finds himself not only surrounded by party politics, but also in a milieu against which he rebels, not only against what exists, but rebels *in favor* of humanity. While he is sometimes in opposition, often his attitude is interpreted simply as negative when, in fact, it is an affirmation.

When we consider the question of joint action, we are faced with the problem of commitment, conscience and consequence. The Christian realizes that he must work together with others—not alone, like the fanatic Zarathustra. He must get together with his fellow men to work for humanity and for the full attainment of a new existential life for the human being. So he commits himself, moving from reflection to action. And here he must face the acute problem of action. While we remain in the realm of concepts, it is very easy to *think* about one type of action or another. But the real problem arises when we have to move on to *action itself*.

Rightly or wrongly, in the realm of reflection we can maintain our western concepts of good and evil, which are clearly defined categories in our mind. But when we pass from one field of human existence to another, we realize that our categories are not inflexible.

If we consider the field of trade, for example, we may be faced with a situation such as this: if we say to a businessman, "Look, if you buy a product for one hundred pesos and sell it for a hundred and twenty, you are making a profit." He will answer that that is what is meant by business—that there must be a profit margin. The principle he is using is utilitarian. If we ask the same businessman which is the best product, he will show us one, and if we ask why, he will say, "Well, because it gives me a profit of 50%." This is the criterion he uses.

In the same way, the Christian moving from reflection to action has to use the principle of efficacy. He must ask himself whether or not his action on behalf of humanity is effective or not. Action does not permit categories of good or evil, but is measured simply in terms of effectiveness. And the confrontation becomes more acute in Latin America when that Christian faces his bourgeois neighbors, who operate on the basis of an ethical terminology, while the Christian proceeds from an incarnational terminology: the practice of living, of action.

Much has been written about action. One of the biggest problems is whether or not Christians should participate in violence. Naturally, much depends on what we mean by violence. For the religious leaders who met at the 2nd Gen-

eral Latin American Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference in Medellin in 1968, there exists in Latin America a form of institutional violence, by which our violence would be categorized as violence by reaction.

In practice, the problem arises in a confused situation in which a huge mass of people moves according to unforeseeable psychic impulses, so that we cannot tell what will happen. Anyone who has ever taken part in a demonstration can testify that in reality violence cannot be foreseen. It is a moment which happens.

In some Christian circles, it is often said that violence is sometimes acceptable as a historical eventuality, but not as a permanent situation within the political context. When we talk of the gospel and action, I believe that there is only one road open to us. And that is that we should accept the Christian discipleship as an incarnation in ourselves, as the presence in and through us of God's creative power, which is called love. If we accept ourselves in that sense, there can really be a witness in the Latin American situation in which we could act as agents of change and of human attainment, fighting for the whole man, although at this moment we concentrate our action on behalf of man in the socio-economic field since this is at present of prime importance in Latin America.

As I have already said, the disciple is faced with a structural problem. Today it is sometimes said that Christians are basically anarchists. We believe that the God who comes to meet us in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, cannot be seen as directly as we might look at a row of books on a shelf. Man is not in that position when he talks about God. The situation is this: the Holy Spirit speaks of the Son, who is in his turn sent by the Father. And it is the Holy Spirit who guides our existence, in the midst of the terrifying ambiguity in which we are placed, toward a situation in which in the end that Spirit abolishes the law which Christ already has abolished. Because rightly or wrongly, any regime represents law, and law represents repression.

When we study the Scriptures, we are often faced with words which force us to question whether we are really Christian or not. Our dogmatic filing system need not contain all the index cards of orthodoxy. Rather, it is important that man become incarnate, that he live as a Christian in the situation which surrounds him. In the Scriptures we find words such as those of John: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:16)

In Latin America we have examples such as Che Guevara, Camilo Torres, and others which have inspired the young. These were men who risked everything by living the radical demands of John's words.



We all say that we read the Bible. But if we are walking along the street and see a child about to be run over by a truck, how many of us would dare to throw ourselves in its path to try to save him? Which of us would give his life to save that little Christian, who has been baptized, destroying his own life to save the child? This is an indication of the terrifying radical demands of our Christian faith which we do not want to recognize. We want to be disciples, but only if God will agree to our conditions. We want to decide how to be Christian disciples. And precisely because of the demands of radical action, we conveniently gloss over or ignore the parts we do not like. Indeed we are very clever at this, almost as if we have learned it by tradition. Anything radical bothers us, in spite of the fact that radicality is nothing more nor less than following to its final consequence the line of thought by which man becomes human. In the last analysis, neither radicality nor violence is the most distinctive factor of the present day. Man lives out the creative dynamism which leads to what the New Testament calls *agape*, love. We understand the kenotic (Phil. 2:5-8) action of Christ through which he reveals to man his quality as a human being.

When we analyze society, both inside and outside our pastoral situation, we realize that man is being trodden on, used, manipulated and repressed, while we look on with the smile of accomplices. This is the situation, if we want to accept it, in which we must act and commit ourselves. What Latin America expects of us as Christians is action, not as speculation but as incarnation. I do not know how far we are prepared to follow what the Bible tells us, but we are called to live out creative love as a fundamental attitude.

I want to end by emphasizing man as value, not merely in the Nietzschean sense, but creatively, as the value of creation and redemption. Paul said that man is already moving towards the fullness of Christ. Men—in the streets, hills, factories and in every walk of life—are waiting to see the “new man”, that new man who really comes to them with the burning desire for liberation and human fulfilment. They are waiting for us. Who knows how many more centuries they will have to wait? Perhaps they will get tired, and won’t wait for us any longer . . .

But we are called, as Christians, to act our discipleship, to bring about the complete human being. Today, we cannot conceive of any form of Christianity which is not based on its presence in us and on conscious, consistent and radical action. This is the only way in which we can conceive of a vital reality, whether it be Christian or any other sort, if we want to follow the lines I have sketched out, and which are not mine alone. Thus the roads which sometimes seem to us so extreme and difficult, such as guerrilla warfare, can be understood and sometimes even shared. Thus when we are faced with situations of traditional morality of good and evil, we ask ourselves: are we defending abstract principles of our own making, or are we defending real men, in flesh and blood, who supposedly live out those principles?

If we could act in this way as Christians, there would be both action and gospel. Perhaps, not so much a conceptualized gospel which we try to put into words, but rather a gospel which affects our whole life, sending us into the future from the perspective of Jesus Christ. If Christians of this type appear in Latin America—which is in fact happening—we can begin to talk of the gospel of action, of how God is present in the world. And only then, little by little, will we be able to start formulating a deductive/inductive theology and not mere affirmations.

*Translated from the Spanish by Mrs. Helen Franco, Geneva, Switzerland.*



HARDING MEYER

## The Gospel and our Union

The Latin American Lutheran Conferences are not separated and isolated events. They are interrelated in their subjects and questions and show a distinct continuity. I should like, therefore, to try to deal with my subject by referring to what was said at the last Conference in Lima about the ecumenical situation and the task of Lutheranism. I hope thereby that my reflections will be related more concretely within the local context and its problems.

There are three things that particularly stand out for me and perhaps also for you, for those of you who were present in Lima. These will serve as the occasion and the point of reference for what I have to say.

I should like to refer first to the idea of the "end of the confessional era" which Professor Wolfgang Trillhaas emphasized strongly in his lecture at Lima on "The ecumenical responsibility of the Reformation". He did not mean that confessional expressions of Christianity do not exist today or that they have lost their significance. What he meant was that the confessional churches (having their beginning in the Reformation) that are self-sufficient, separated from and judgmental of one another, must today be considered obsolete. "The day of the closed door is past!" These reflections must be carried further. Ecumenical theory has gained new stimuli and perspective in recent years. This is the *first* set of questions that we have to face.

The second aspect of Lima I remember with particular clarity is the informal report of Dr. Paul C. Empie, General Secretary of the US National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, concerning the first official meeting of North American Catholics and Lutherans, which had taken place a couple of days before. Since then many things have happened in the field of interconfessional conversations, not only in North America and not only in relation to the Catholic Church. What do these numerous bilateral talks between Lutheran and non-Lutheran churches mean for our present situation and our future tasks? What influence do they have for our striving for inter-Lutheran unity? This is the *second* problem area in my lecture.

Finally, I refer to the decision at Lima to work towards the formation of a "Latin American Lutheran Council" and this will certainly come up for discussion in other contexts at this Conference as well. We are all aware that it has not been possible to implement this decision since an increasing number believe that this "Latin American Lutheran Council" should not come into being

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at all. It is felt that it is more promising for Latin American Lutherans to seek cooperation and unity on a regional or national level. I will not deal with this special question directly, but will take it as a starting-point for a short discussion of the current urgent question about the relation of international to regional and national efforts for unity. This then will be the *third* and last area with which I shall deal.

### I. New stimuli and perspectives in ecumenical thought today

The conference in Lima took place at a time when the concept of 'dialog' had become almost a key word, an ecumenical 'open sesame!'. Magazines and articles which had used this concept or had this as their purpose, sprang up like mushrooms after rain. This word was on everyone's lips. One even talked about the 'miracle of dialog'.

Meanwhile, a distinct disillusionment has set in. One began to use the expression with irony. Some people thought they could diagnose a general 'dialogitis' as a currently 'fashionable disease'. Visser't Hooft, for example, conjectured sarcastically that perhaps even Buridan's ass died because of his dialogical stance, i.e., malnutrition caused by acute and stubborn open-mindedness.

Certainly it was not the intent to reject the dialog or claim that it was useless. However, one saw the danger of absolutizing dialog, as if it were the goal of all ecumenical paths. Over against this it was felt necessary to emphasize that the dialog was not an end in itself and was to be a challenge leading to concrete ecumenical decisions. After all, the concern was not just a question of brotherly meetings of Christians and churches, of eliminating misunderstandings, of mutual enrichment or of theological consensus. We cannot 'dialog' endlessly and then use a dialog which does not bind us as an ecumenical alibi. We must make decisions and implement them. The brotherly meeting, the high-sounding declarations of unity and the polished theses of consensus have to be transformed into living church fellowship through concrete steps and decisions on the road to unity. This is the criterion for the authenticity of the dialog. The strong pressure to move from dialog to fellowship is certainly one of the new aspects of ecumenical thought in recent years.

The other new factor that I want to refer to is strongly connected with the first one but moves considerably beyond it. This is the rather general criticism of traditional ecumenism which in part takes on very radical forms. The efforts for unity, so they say, have become a preoccupation of the church with itself, with its internal problems and its own dissensions and needs. These efforts have become ecclesiastically introverted and therefore irrelevant. Hence, it is now time to reorient the ecumenical efforts not according to the church itself, but according to its mission and its service which it has to fulfil in the world.

This understanding of ecumenical commitment certainly is not completely new.



As you know, the ecumenical movement began with this conception. One sought for unity in order to better fulfil the missionary and social task of the church. In the further development of the ecumenical movement this was never forgotten and was repeatedly emphasized. It is clearly evident that the original motivation gave way more and more to an understanding of unity which was primarily interested in the relationships of the churches to one another. The ecumenical guiding principle, that it is our concern to make the essential and God-given unity of the church visible and manifest, is in my opinion an expression of this ecclesiastical contraction of ecumenical thought.

I think it is useless and not very profitable to decide basically which understanding is correct and which is incorrect: the understanding of ecumenism which is oriented to 'essence' or to 'mission'. The answer depends too much upon the historical situation in which our theological thinking and judgment takes place. In the theological climate of the thirties to the fifties (rediscovery of the church as an integrated part of the Christian message, influence of dialectical theology) it was clear that a stronger theological and ecclesiastical understanding of unity was dominant and must appear as the proper one. It is equally clear that today only an ecumenism can appear to be evident, significant, which is oriented along the missionary and social task of the church, because of the decisive theological change of climate in the last ten years (consciousness of solidarity of the church with the world, weakening of the ecclesiastical interest, prominence of the diaspora and mission situation, the desire for the church to be active in the socio-political area).

I think one should take notice "*sine ira et studio*" of a certain relativization in the understanding of the ecumenical task. This does not mean that one ought to let oneself be driven simply by the spirit of the age, but that one ought to discern the signs of the time and as a pilgrim church come to grips with the problems of the moment and where history has placed us. Even the New Testament does not force us to put a flagrant alternative between these two conceptions. It seems clear to me that John, for instance, is on the side of an essentially 'ecclesiastical' ecumenism. Unity appears with him as an essential work of the church. It is the earthly reflection of the heavenly unity between Father and Son (John 17:21ff). Certainly unity also is in the service of mission (John 17, 18), but this mission does not really mean the world, but aims towards the collection of God's children who are scattered in the world (John 11:52). On the other side is Paul with his "body of Christ" conception, which represents one of the most important guiding principles of ecumenical thought. Modern exegesis has tried to show, though not without contradiction, that Paul did not use this conception as a statement about the 'essence' but about the 'function' of the church. The Christian communion, as the body of Christ, represents the place at which Christ through the members of his body wants to go out into the world, to seek and serve the world. The Christian communion in its entirety and in the cooperation of its members (the organs of his grace) is the place through which his grace spreads everywhere and

constantly. This grace with the abundance of its charismata does not leave any time or any place without its promise.

I think that this Pauline understanding of the church and its unity which is primarily oriented to mission and mandate, has more immediate clarity for us today than the Johannine view, leaving the question aside here of how far both belong together and do not exclude each other. The Pauline understanding is obviously the right word for the present hour and we should decidedly affirm it. That this is generally acknowledged is clear from the representative statements on the question of unity which have arisen in recent years. Without pursuing them further at this time, I would at least like to make reference to them. I think of the report of Section I of Uppsala ("The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church"), the report of the last Lambeth Conference ("Renewal of the Church in Unity"), and above all the study document of the LWF with the programmatic and challenging title, "More than Church Unity" (see *Lutheran World*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, 1970, pp. 43-50).

The main question now is: what do these new or rediscovered aspects of ecumenical thinking mean for the practical fulfillment of our ecumenical efforts—on the one hand the insistence on living fellowship, on the other hand the orientation to the mission and mandate of the church?

I would like to emphasize four points:

1) We should abandon the idea of a comprehensive theological consensus as the absolutely necessary prerequisite for fellowship among the churches. Certainly it is essential that consensus and fellowship go hand in hand and that all Christian fellowship is a fellowship of the truth. But we should be on our guard against the perfectionistic attitude of the 'all or nothing at all'. There are different levels of theological consensus which must correspond to different levels of living fellowship. Therefore it is now more than ever necessary to look for relevant intermediate steps of church fellowship, which correspond to the different steps of theological consensus. Only if we succeed in this can that fruitful interaction between consensus and fellowship be achieved, which we Lutherans especially have neglected so sovereignly with our 'one-way' principle: first theological agreement, only then church fellowship. The study document of the LWF emphasizes rightly: "It cannot be overlooked that . . . living church fellowship can also be the basis and means for overcoming of the differences and contradictions." (p. 48) The report of a Consultation of the LWF on Lutheran Unity in December 1969 formulates it similarly: "Both our agreement in confession and doctrine as well as our quest for presently viable forms of fellowship belong together. Common confession and common doctrine are not merely the consequent fulfillment of previously existing fellowship, nor, conversely, is the existence of fellowship a consequence of having reached agreement on doctrine. Both must grow together and deepen." (cf.



*Sent Into The World: The Proceedings of the Fifth Assembly of the LWF—Minneapolis:* Augsburg Publishing House, 1971, p. 74).

2) The orientation to the mission and mandate of the church prevents us from taking a retrospective attitude in our efforts for unity. One certainly has to admit that it would make little sense today to look for the unity of Christianity for instance on the basis of the "Consensus quinquesaecularis", that means, on the creeds of the first five centuries, because such a consensus simply would not be sufficient orientation for the present proclamation and for the present service of the church in the world. But the same goes retrospectively for every other epoch of the past. The overcoming of the doctrinal divergencies which have come down to us from the past or the establishment of a theological consensus on the basis of past confessional statements may very well have a somewhat 'unblocking' effect on our efforts for unity.

But it is highly doubtful whether in that way a fellowship of service and mission can really be established. Therefore the study document of the LWF emphasizes strongly: "We must avoid a merely retrospective and doctrinaire position which would concentrate primarily on the overcoming of traditional doctrinal differences and which consequently removes from the dialog its immediate orientation to the church's task of proclamation." (p. 49) What is necessary is described as follows in the report of the Consultation on Lutheran Unity: "The concern is that we together interpret the gospel anew from the viewpoint of the present context of our witness and formulate this reinterpretation" (Cf. *Sent Into The World*", p. 74.) This should be the main emphasis of all doctrinal conversations among the churches.

3) The stronger orientation of ecumenical thinking to the task of the church in the world, reinforces and deepens the understanding of the necessity to vary and diversify forms of Christian service, because the manifold structured world can only be penetrated by manifold organized services. This was expressed clearly in Uppsala. It says there: "Diversity may be a perversion of catholicity but often it is a genuine expression of the apostolic vocation of the Church . . . By such diversities . . . the Spirit leads us forward on the way to a fully catholic mission and ministry." (*The Uppsala 68 Report*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968, p. 15) Perhaps it is too sharp and provocative to say: Our efforts for unity are not there to overcome diversities but to encourage and look for the right diversities. This, however, is not to be interpreted as if the traditional variety of confessional traditions have to be conserved and cultivated. I admit that it is absolutely possible—and I am convinced of it myself—that a Catholic, a Reformed, an Orthodox and an Anglican tradition of understanding the gospel still has today a functional value for the mission of the church. The demand for variety, however, reaches beyond that. It is the demand for new variety which meets the tasks of proclamation in the multi-form world of today. Within this new variety of forms, the traditional variety will still find its appropriate place.

4) Finally, the stronger orientation of ecumenical thinking towards service and mission also implies a new evaluation and a new understanding of Christian and ecclesiastical cooperation. Even yet the general opinion still seems to dominate that church cooperation is simply the preliminary stage and means of church unity and that it has only the function of being an ecumenical pro-paedeutic. Taking ecumenical thinking into consideration which orients itself along the primacy of mission and service, it, however, becomes clear that cooperation should really be the goal and criterion of ecumenical efforts and of church fellowship.

The reason for the underestimation of church cooperation lies in the fact that in a kind of alienation one has disassociated cooperation on the one hand and theological consensus, agreement in the faith, on the other. One thought that cooperation was neutral theologically in a certain sense and could therefore occur even where one was separated in faith. However, in reality both are closely interrelated: whether it be in mission, in evangelization, in theological education, in church journalism or in the social field, and are only possible and significant and constitute true common action when there is agreement on what has to be preached, taught, communicated and done. On the other hand, theological and ecclesiastical consensus is only relevant and right if it has the force to enable and evoke common action. This close relation between consensus and cooperation, where the one cannot exist without the other, has to be noticed and sought today.

## II. Ecumenical rapprochement and the problem of Lutheran unity

Since Lima, a remarkable number of official and semi-official bilateral conversations of Lutherans with other churches (the Catholic, the Anglican, the Reformed and Orthodox Churches) have taken place, not only on the regional or national level but also on the international universal level. The results are quite encouraging and in part even astonishing. For instance, the North American as well as the European talks with the Reformed resulted in showing that the present differences in theological thinking do not have a church-separating character. The Catholic-Lutheran meetings in the USA and on the universal level also reached results which demand attention: the doctrine of justification does not seem to represent a church-dividing problem any more. Also in the understanding of the Lord's Supper, of God's word and of the church's ministry, a promising convergence is to be seen.

In these conversations it becomes evident, as I already mentioned, that there is strong pressure towards the implementation of church fellowship. They go beyond what they originally aimed at, i.e., overcoming of doctrinal differences, clarification of misunderstanding, elimination of points of friction, etc. In Europe presently a "Concord" is being worked out which should enable the establishment of church fellowship between all Lutheran, Reformed and United churches of Europe and which will be submitted for ratification in the next



year or two. The conversation with Anglicans and Catholics understandably has not reached this point yet, but they also aim at intercommunion and mutual recognition of the ministry, and therefore at the establishment of pulpit and altar fellowship.

Now the question is how these dialogs, which are taking or have taken place in the USA, in Europe or on the universal level can have a stronger influence on the Latin American situation and perhaps serve as models or 'representative dialogs'. It is obvious that in Latin America and in the individual Latin American countries, the problems present themselves in a very specific way. Therefore, the European Lutheran-Reformed conversations or the international Catholic-Lutheran dialog, for example, could not simply replace similar conversations in Latin America. Even so, the important basic questions are the same everywhere and could perhaps to a certain degree be clarified for other areas vicariously through such 'representative dialogs'. Then the dialogs would not have to start from scratch in every country. They could build on the other dialogs, receive their results, modify them if necessary, and above all they could dedicate themselves to the specific questions of their own situation. I think that a question occurs here, which should be considered thoroughly in this Conference.

As satisfactory as these ecumenical approaches are on the one hand, on the other hand they imply problematic difficulties for Lutheran unity. This has to be regarded with sobriety. The Consultation on Lutheran Unity, which I mentioned before, certainly lays down the right principle: "The question of unity among Lutheran churches cannot be solved in self-centeredness and isolation, but rather in the context of neighboring non-Lutheran churches and the universal church." (Cf. *Sent Into The World*, p. 74) But what will actually happen in practice? Will the consequence of a Lutheran-Reformed agreement and church fellowship not result in splintering off of Lutheran groups or in hardening already existing inter-Lutheran tensions and divisions? And in view of all other conceivable or impending rapprochements between Lutheran and non-Lutheran churches, would not something similar have to be expected? What becomes evident here is a prime ecumenical problem which imposes itself at all times, where ecumenical meetings and dialogs enter the stage where steps and decisions become binding. It is the phenomenon that new realizations of unity can cause new separations. The ecumenical path obviously is no continuous process, no steady growth of unity. This path seems to have to lead through breaches and new divisions. The church union in Germany of the 19th century, the formation of the Church of South India, and also the union of the two Lutheran churches in Australia, which was accomplished a couple of years ago, are only some examples of that.

We should not belittle this problem by saying that pulpit and altar fellowship, e.g., with the Reformed or the Anglican Church, leaves Lutheran identity untouched. If two churches which have previously understood themselves to be

separate, overcome this separation partially or completely, they are no longer what they were before. Even though no complete union has occurred and therefore no fully new identity is established, these churches will have a changed understanding of themselves and thereby also a changed identity. The problem described above, therefore, occurs inevitably wherever a serious dialog is held and wherever there are serious efforts to overcome ecclesiastical divisions.

What has to be done?

The answer is extremely difficult and I cannot here suggest an easy solution. But I am convinced that two extreme attempts at solution should be avoided in the present situation. The one extreme is what I would like to call the application of the 'convoy-principle': no binding ecumenical step will be taken without making sure that also the slowest of the Lutheran churches and groups can follow. The urgency of the ecumenical task and the fact that a monolithic Lutheranism does not exist, neither regarding theology nor church structures, prevents us from this solution. The other extreme is not to care any longer for fellowship of the Lutheran churches and to declare this whole idea of Lutheran fellowship as obsolete.

Between these two extremes, what are the possibilities of solution?

In Lima, it was said concerning the ecumenical task of Lutheranism that a three-fold dialog has to be carried out: the dialog with Catholicism, the dialog with the Protestant churches, and the "inner-Lutheran" dialog, it being understood that this "inner-Lutheran" dialog should constitute the starting point and the basis for any other dialog. How is this to be interpreted? If this is to signify that the inner-Lutheran dialog is really the most obvious ecumenical task, that in such a dialog the possibilities of understanding are especially great and that the dialog with non-Lutheran churches should not lose sight of the total Lutheran fellowship, then this is certainly a good guiding principle which should be followed, as far as possible. But if this is made into the inflexible principle: Lutheran unity as a necessary prerequisite for all other efforts and realizations of unity, then this would amount to the 'convoy-principle' previously mentioned and could block radically the ecumenical commitment of Lutheranism. I would, therefore, warn urgently against establishing such a principle on a regional or universal level. At most it could function as a very temporary working hypothesis, which has to be revised where it fails.

One must observe very carefully what happens in Australia. Will this Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), which was formed by two formerly separate churches, succeed after its consolidation in reestablishing the once interrupted contacts with other Lutheran churches in the world and with the LWF, and beyond this dedicate itself also to the wider ecumenical task?



Personally, I would plead for a flexible strategy. It seems questionable to me whether one can choose one's ecumenical partner based on the criterion of theological and historical nearness. In my opinion the concrete situation, the almost spatial nearness, is more determinative. Our ecumenical partners are mainly those whom we encounter repeatedly in our daily life, with whom we get irritated constantly, from whom we cannot escape and who are confronted together with us with the same tasks and problems of a certain time and place. We will have to look for fellowship with all these churches. The question of the fellowship of the Lutheran churches should thereby be a constant concern but not a law which prevents us from doing the ecumenically urgent and necessary.

### III. The question of regional and universal church fellowship

I have already pointed out that an orientation of our ecumenical thinking and action to the mission and service of the church in the world shows clearly the necessity of theological and ecclesiastical variety. Christian witness and Christian service are never carried out in the abstract and the general, always within a concrete context, in a certain historical, geographical and cultural context, in view of a certain audience, and facing specific social and political problems. It is not only inevitable but also necessary that this concrete context determines the character of our witness and the style of our socio-political action if we really want to reach the multiform world with our witness and service. This is already clear in the New Testament: the witness of primitive Christianity appears there in an astonishing multiformity which was essentially determined by the respective situations of witness (Judaism, Hellenism, first generation, second generation, etc.).

Seen from this point, it is obvious that we first try to realize church fellowship where Christians and churches live in the same situation, that is, in a certain country, a certain region, in a certain cultural or political context. In this sense the Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi (1961) stated the principle of unity of "all Christians in each place". The Consultation on Lutheran Unity in 1969 argued similarly: "The situation in which the church bears its witness must be taken seriously as a determining factor in the question of fellowship among churches of the Lutheran confession." (Cf. *Sent Into The World*, p. 73)

Our ecumenical efforts should not only from the beginning be directed towards the goal of maximum unity (unity of Christians on a whole continent or even in the whole world), but rather, if I may use these terms, have the goal of 'optimal unity'. That means a unity which can really be lived in common witness and service, a unity which does not paralyze the witness and service in the concrete situation, because of its much too comprehensive scope.

This cannot be emphasized and practiced strongly enough, as long as "one remembers the opposite truth", as Pascal once said. Christianity enters into different situations, but does not lose itself in them. It does not identify itself with a culture, a race, a language, a nation or a geographical area in such a manner that the existing cultural, racial, linguistic, ethnical or geographical limits would be at the same time the limits of Christianity. Or what would be even worse, that Christianity would sanction and deepen these limits as has unfortunately occurred many times in the recent and more distant past. Therefore each has to be taken into account with a view to seek to do justice to both: i.e., the particularity and the universal character of the Christian faith and the Christian witness. For both are interdependent, since the gospel is valid for *all* cultures, races, countries and times, it appears in *different* cultural, historical, ethnical and geographical manifestations.

This will have to be taken into consideration even where the regionalization of our unity efforts is justified and necessary. The Assembly of the WCC in Uppsala in 1968 has therefore complemented the principle of New Delhi, which emphasized with a certain onesidedness, the unity of "all Christians in *each* place" with the simultaneous emphasis on the universal fellowship of "all Christians in *all* places". The Consultation on Lutheran Unity has also pointed out this aspect and asked how the "comprehensive unity among Lutheran churches", which transcends the national and ethnic limits, can "be rightly preserved", along with the realization of Lutheran unity in particular situations of witness. This question should not be regarded as unimportant. The universality of Christianity and also the comprehensive fellowship of Lutheran churches in the world cannot remain an empty assertion and disembodied idea. One has to work and strive for it. It must be nurtured and preserved. It must find an expression and perhaps also have a place, where one works for it in a special manner. For if this effort for the universal dimension, i.e., the dimension of the Christian faith which transcends and intersects the secular dividing lines of this world, is neglected it could happen that we indeed leave behind the confessional divisions of Christianity, but exchange them for national, regional, racial and cultural separations, which might be deadlier for the reconciling ministry of the church in the world than all confessional divergencies.

My concrete but silent question in all this is would or could the formation of the Latin America Lutheran Council which had been recommended in Lima have had a function within the framework of these necessities. If that is true, it might possibly be advisable not to dismiss this recommendation without a viable substitute.



## GENEVA DIARY

"I think this is the most exciting and worthwhile international consultation I have attended. We have dealt with our questions—issues and challenges drawn from actual practice rather than from theory. In the process we have had that kind of frank and open dialog with representatives from other cultures and churches, and with the Lutheran World Federation that I have often sought but not found. Now I am even more convinced that although we must plan, develop and implement the Christian education ministries of our churches in the context of our own faith, understandings and situations, we need the benefit of exchange of information and insights provided by such consultations and the LWF consultative services in Christian education."

So stated a participant at the International Consultation for Lutheran World Federation Related Christian Education Curriculum Development Programs held in Geneva from February 13-22, 1972, under the auspices of the LWF Department of Studies. The consultation brought 16 specialists—if not by training, certainly by experience—in Christian education curriculum planning and development, together with Geneva staff. Twelve of these participants came from Asia and Africa. They represented, as chairmen or executive secretaries of curriculum projects, 56 churches with a baptized membership of more than 2,100,000, working together in 10 co-operative Christian education curriculum development projects for the preparation of curricula for 31 Christian education agencies and the planning for new curricula in the future for 22 more. The geographical areas represented were: Liberia, Ethiopia, Tanzania, the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea, Philippines, New Guinea. In addition there were 4 specialists from the USA and Europe.

*Context of the Consultation*

The consultation was held in response to requests received from the curriculum projects in Asia and Africa. The need to rethink the purpose and function of Christian education and to develop more adequate ministries within the churches is felt by many churches, particularly in Asia and Africa, many of which have inherited their educational understandings, programs, content and method largely from the West—churches which have been so heavily involved in education that as late as 1959 it was said that at least 80% of primary education in sub-Saharan Africa was under the control of missions. Missions have now been replaced by autonomous, self-governing, self-propagating churches; churches which are challenged to define and fulfil their purpose and function in the context of rapid socio-political economic changes and the demands of the societies and cultures in which they live. Central to this challenge is education—that Christian education which enables a person to so grow in understanding, attitudes and behavior that he may be a responsible citizen in church and society. This demands education that is meaningful, indigenous

and usable in the context and thought patterns of people where they are. To this end, many churches in Asia and Africa are now giving priority to the development of new Christian education curriculum materials—in which they include research into the age level characteristics and life involvements of the person, a rethinking of the churches' entire educational ministry, a restructuring of the churches' educational agencies and implementation of this planning through actual curricula which in thought pattern, language, content and method are indigenous to those involved. In this undertaking churches have joined together with others in common effort, and the LWF is providing consultative services on request, the intent of such services being to help Christian churches to help themselves.

### *Purpose of the Consultation*

The specific purpose of the consultation, since it grew out of requests from the curriculum development projects, was:

1. To explore and discuss issues and problems arising out of the curriculum development projects;
2. To challenge the curriculum development projects and their supporting churches with emerging issues, concerns and developments in society and education, and hopefully thereby encourage creative approaches to Christian education through cross-fertilization of ideas;
3. To obtain and discuss new insights (especially in terms of new thinking and models) concerning the educational challenges and possibilities in the ministry of the churches, with special emphasis upon the use of mass media in education, and the development of more effective leadership training programs.

An incidental purpose was to provide the LWF Department of Studies with an evaluation of its consultative services; insights into how an international organization such as the LWF can best assist and be assisted by churches in understanding and meeting challenges and issues; and suggestions as to ways by which worthwhile communication and dialog across cultural, religious and social boundaries can best be achieved.

### *Structure of the Consultation*

The achievement of purposes is accomplished through structure, content and process. To this end the following was built into the structure of the consultation:

- 1) Participation in the consultation was limited to those who are chairmen or executive secretaries of the church or church-related Christian education curriculum development programs—in other words, to those, directly involved in structures, who are now responsible for and engaged in developing concrete education programs—hopefully therefore in a position to bring to the consultation the realities of practice and to feed back to their churches the insights gained through their participation.
- 2) The content of the consultation was based on the actual issues, problems and questions raised by the curriculum projects themselves. Each project submitted statements of issues and problems with which they wished the consultation to deal. On



collation of these submissions it was found that they could be categorized under seven major subject headings. These then became the agenda for the consultation. The areas dealt with were: The purpose and content of Christian education; The function and methodology of Christian education; The structure and administration of Christian education; The development of curricula and materials for Christian education; Conscientization in the educational process and changing strategies in church education; Using mass media for education; and Leadership training for Christian education. The actual questions categorized under these headings were used as a basis for introductory presentations in each category and for the group discussions which followed. By this approach, basic issues, theological and pedagogical, were not divorced from concrete reality. Immediacy and relevancy was built into the program from the beginning.

3) One and a half hours of scheduled interviews were built into the agenda for each day, assuring an opportunity for the participants to converse individually with each of the other participants and with Geneva staff. Many felt that this was perhaps the most helpful innovation of the consultation.

4) A detailed study report was prepared and sent to each participant well in advance of the consultation. This document made available information provided by each project concerning its challenges, problems, accomplishments and limitations. The intent in so doing was to minimize the time normally spent in international consultations in describing what "we are doing in my church". Copies of this study document are available from the Secretary for Christian Education, Lutheran World Federation, 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, under the title "New Curricula for Christian Education".

5) Minimum time was given to presentations, and maximum time to group and plenary discussions. The unsolved problem which remained throughout was how to effectively report back to plenary what took place in discussion groups. The excitement of personal discovery and the insights of specificity were too often lost or minimized in the condensed group reports.

### *Content of the Consultation*

It is interesting that the findings from the consultation are presented in two categories; those summarizing the substance of the discussions on issues and problems, and those directed to the Study Commission and Department of the LWF. This dichotomy reflects what actually happened during the eight days of dialog.

From the beginning, the discussion focused on items of the agenda itself, participants feeling that they should deal with the questions and issues delineated for each day. However, underlying all discussions, especially in plenary sessions, was the question of commitment and intent—not only for churches and Christian education curriculum development programs but also for world organizations such as the LWF. Although there were no resolutions to this effect, it was evident from the outset that participants felt that as a basic educative principle it should be recognized that the selection of issues, the phrasing of content and questions, and the processes used, relate directly

to one's commitment and intention. It is imperative, therefore, that in the educative process intentions be clearly spelt out before a discussion of how and what should be done can take place. Unless intentions are declared, understood and agreed upon by those involved, the process itself may result in manipulation—manipulation of those who do not see to what end and how they are being used. In the same sense, questions and issues, when phrased in connection with historical, theological or pedagogical interpretations or in the content of a specific ideology or understanding, may themselves become manipulative unless the intent of the question is seen. An example was a film shown to illustrate the possibilities of a conscientization approach to basic felt needs. The film had been produced in Africa by African students. However, the reaction of participants was: Manipulation! The content, vocabulary and selection and use of the media was felt to illustrate how persons may be manipulated to a particular ideology, including mode of expression and behavior, through the processes by which they are conscientized and involved if the basic intentions of those—the teacher, leader, international secretary—promoting the process are not understood. Therefore in the educative process, whether in the school, community, church or between churches and international bodies such as the LWF, intentions or objectives must be clearly spelled out. Otherwise individuals, communities and churches will not be free to see and deal with issues in their own situations and their own understandings as responsible persons or structures.

In this understanding the consultation stressed that the ultimate intentions of the church and of Christian education is centered in the gospel, in Christ as the timeless message—that is, the message that transcends time and place—which is to be proclaimed. Method and media must follow this intention, continually modified and changed to meet the demands of the situation and those involved. This means that issues must be dealt with in the context of the gospel, but by those where the issues are. In this process the challenge and assistance of others, their experiences and insights, are needed; but the integrity and right to choose of those making the decisions must be respected. This has basic implications at all levels. For relationships between churches and international organizations such as the LWF, it means that such organizations must take care that they do not, unconsciously or consciously, contribute an imperialism of thought or ideology by selection of content and the processes used.

The consultation stated that Christian education should be seen as a lifelong process—that is, a responsibility not just of teacher and learner but of the entire teaching-learning community—in the church, of the entire congregation and of the church at large. It is a process in which the responsibility of the teaching-learning community is to be continually balanced with the integrity of the learners. It is therefore best served by those who are served by it. Its theology is the faith of the teaching-learning community, its context and focus in life is the situation in which the teaching-learning community lives. Indigenization is at the heart of this Christian education process. The findings state: It is taken for granted that language, modes of expression and logic, and illustrations (both verbal and pictorial) must be representative of the local situation, and that participation in the dynamics of curriculum content development must be predominantly national and representative of the church's life in that particular area, so as to ensure relevance to real life concerns and involvements in the context of appropriate value systems, and yet be alert to the dangers of syncretism. 'That which is indigenous is that which really works.'



In other words, to be indigenous does not mean painting Christ as an African, Indian or Chinese. In fact it was felt that such portrayals are too often expressions of racism, nationalism or tribalism which contradict the historicity of Christ and the brotherhood of man. In the same sense, music, forms of worship, church structures and administration, theological understandings, and pedagogical approaches are not to be judged indigenous on the basis of their distinctiveness. Rather, whether something is indigenous or not is to be judged on the basis of whether it works or not—that is, whether it represents and expresses the thought patterns, beliefs, understandings, attitudes, behaviors, limitations and intentions of a given community within a given culture. This understanding frees individuals or communities in any given situation to use from other cultures or from a world perspective anything which is valid for them in their situation.

For this, the consultation stated that inter-church cooperation is essential: "While recognizing that every church has its own specific purposes for Christian education, it is also recognized that united Christian witness and concern is of vital importance in multi-regional nations and pluralistic societies. Therefore inter-church cooperation at the broadest level is a goal to be sought, keeping in mind the need for honest respect of one another's differences, for open-minded approaches, and at the same time not forsaking so much in the interests of cooperation that no one is effectively served."

Certainly nationalism and independence are also factors which bear on the above. Quoting from the findings: "The implications of independence and nationalism on the content of Christian education was felt to be a very real issue, and it is believed that the church should provide an arena for discussion on the development of educational programs within the context of independence and nationalism. The churches should actively participate in nation-building, including the area of education, but at the same time the church should also be critical of developments which it sees as harmful because the church has the responsibility to be faithful to its prophetic role as well as to exercise its social responsibilities.

In the development of Christian education curricula, this does not demand that church educational programs should become involved in political issues of independence and nationalism. They should, however, help the learner to grow in his ability to make valid decisions, in being a responsible citizen. This means assisting him continually to grow in his understandings of the gospel as a living, vital, unfolding message directed to and alive in society, work and church.

For Christian education, the family is to be seen as: "the basic social unit in every society, and research has shown that early childhood is extremely important in developing the value systems of the child and his attitudes towards establishing relationships with others, and experience has shown that family rituals are important in communicating family values to children. With this in mind, Christian education begins in the home and family, where Christian family rituals are an excellent means of communicating feelings about the Christian faith, and the church has the responsibility to minister to families as well as ministering to individual members of the family. However, the way or method used by which the family is approached is determined by the culture."

In a diary such as this, it is not expedient to reflect on all the questions and issues with which the consultation dealt. There were 52 questions submitted by the projects, 35 of which were discussed. Many of the questions centered on basic theological and pedagogical issues, but many were concrete, practical questions, such as: how to develop more adequate research and testing? how to design a valid educational program when the majority of those who will be the teachers are untrained laymen with only a 3rd or 4th grade education, who in their past educational experiences have been limited to rote memorization of the catechism and Bible verses? how to structure a testing program which will work? how to involve an entire church or a number of churches in the process of curriculum development in such a way as to assure appreciation and use of the new curricula as they are implemented? how to train writers to write materials, who although they can write well in their own thought patterns, have little theological or academic training? The reports of the discussions on these issues are available from the Secretary for Christian Education, Department of Studies, Lutheran World Federation, 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

### *Conclusion:*

Was the consultation a success? If frank and open dialog, ideological and cultural confrontation, "gut" reactions and enthusiasm, exchange of opinions and experiences and a feeling of oneness in commitment but diversity of understandings are the criteria, yes!—in my opinion. But should not the results be judged in terms of effects—what happens in the curriculum development projects, the churches, and the LWF? For this we will have to wait and see.

April 1972

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GEORGE POSFAY

## The Fifth Step Toward Unity

The following report of the Fifth Latin American Lutheran Conference held at José C. Paz, Argentina from August 1-6, 1971 was prepared for us by George Posfay, Secretary for Latin America in the LWF's Department of Church Cooperation. At the conclusion of his brief article we append the reports of the four discussion groups of the Conference to which he refers.

This is the title of one of the reports published in a Latin American country about the Fifth Latin American Lutheran Conference, held between August 1 and 6, 1971 in José C. Paz, Argentina, outside of Buenos Aires. Seemingly, the author of this report considered this as the most important goal of the series of all-Lutheran conferences, held since 1951 in different parts of Latin America, namely, to achieve a sort of unity which makes the proclamation of the gospel believable and efficient. Of course, this understanding of the purpose of these conferences is not only the interpretation of a person, it can also be traced in the documents elaborated and accepted by the conferences. Thus the report of the first discussion group underlines: "the proclamation of the gospel is the announcement of the freedom of man, who is forgiven through Jesus Christ. This freedom consists in the fellowship with God in order to surrender oneself to serve one's fellowman and the world. . . . We wish to confess the fact that in our inter-Lutheran relationships and in our relationships with other Christians we lack this freedom, and that we have to grow in it until we reach true unity."

The fourth group recommends as a starting point the engagement in further inter-Lutheran dialog and the dialog with other churches at all structural levels. Furthermore, it states that the "Church of Christ in its unity and catholicity is present in every local church in which the gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are correctly administered". Therefore it urges the Lutheran churches of Latin America "to break out of their isolation and seek relationships that reach beyond the local and regional restrictions and surpass the ethnic, socio-political, economic and cultural frontiers".

That these conferences should help the churches to break out of their isolationism and feel more responsibility toward each other was emphasized by Dr. Paul C. Empie, General Secretary of the US National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, the only participant of the Fifth Latin American Lutheran Conference who had attended the previous four meetings. On one occasion when he spoke in retrospect he mentioned that the first Latin American Lutheran Conference, held in 1951 in Curitiba, Brazil, was the consequence of the discovery made by visiting Lutheran churchmen from North America that their brethren south of the Rio Grande did not even know about each other, not to mention having an opportunity of meeting one another and reporting about their work or exchanging thoughts about it.

When the second conference was convened in the Brazilian city of Petropolis, close to Rio Janeiro (1954), the already experienced fellowship was present. Also the experience of the churches in Brazil, who started to train their pastors in their own country instead of sending them abroad, contributed to the enthusiastic acceptance of the proposal to found a joint Lutheran seminary for Spanish-speaking Latin America, which was established one year later in Buenos Aires, later moved to José C. Paz and is at present part of the Evangelical Institute for Higher Theological Studies in Buenos Aires. This decision, as well as the other, an attempt to work toward a joint publication strategy and the use of audio-visual aids, contributed much toward the growing together of Lutheran churches in Latin America.

The third conference was held in 1959 in Buenos Aires. It was far more representative than the ones held previously. The Missouri

Synod-affiliated churches, which did not send representatives to the first two meetings, were present through their delegates at this conference. In its first resolution, the conference expressed its conviction "that there should be closer contact between Lutheran bodies on a territorial basis and recommends that the initiative be taken by synods, missions and congregations to establish in each country a common agency . . . as a free channel of communication, consultation and cooperation".

The fourth Latin American Lutheran Conference, held in 1965 in Lima, tried to do something for the unity of Latin American Lutheran churches. It elected seven church leaders to investigate and do the preparatory work—as a kind of provisional coordination committee—for the creation of an organization, preferably a Latin American Lutheran Council which could serve as a vehicle to achieve a greater measure of Lutheran unity on the continent.

The above mentioned committee investigated the feasibility of such a continental Lutheran organization and arrived at the conclusion that, for the time being, the best solution would be to promote the forming of regional Lutheran councils as a basis for Lutheran cooperation. This suggestion was submitted to representatives of the suggested regions assembled in José C. Paz, who discussed the problem and unanimously accepted it as the next step toward the establishment of greater unity among Latin American Lutherans.

For outsiders this recommendation might only fall in the category of 'adiaphora', of matters which have little influence upon the real mission of the church. But by studying the reaction of the church papers, the proposal and the recommendation to employ the method of dialog in finding each other, one can only say that it was often greeted as the manifestation of the beginning of a new era. In the September issue of *Voz do Evangelho*, a church monthly published in Brazil, we can read: "Both Brazilian churches (the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil, an LWF member, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, related to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), however, supported the recommendation to continue the inter-Lutheran dialog on a regional basis. They therefore decided to form a continuing official committee in Brazil to follow up this dialog with regard to questions and problems which concern both churches directly and have been hinderances to closer cooperation, as is literally stated. The dele-

gations of both churches are already to meet this year in an initial discussion. . . .

Both churches expressed their desire for the continuation of Latin American Lutheran Conferences . . . Although the representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil only participated as observers, they did issue an invitation from their synod to hold the Sixth Latin American Lutheran Conference in Pôrto Alegre.

The decision concerning future discussions involving both churches is to be simultaneously a *public declaration of their willingness 'to mutually recognize and accept one another'*, as the document states."

As another vehicle to promote greater Lutheran unity, the reorganization of production centers of Lutheran literature in Latin America can be mentioned. The Fifth Latin American Lutheran Conference recommended—as we can read in the most elaborate report published in *Noticiero de la fe*, a church monthly from Buenos Aires—about the conference: "the constitution of regional committees, which will have as their objectives: the recognition, coordination and expression of the needs of the Lutheran churches regarding literature and the channeling of them to existing publishing houses".

A consultation of professors and alumni of the existing five institutions of higher theological education, where pastors for the Lutheran churches in Latin America are trained, was also agreed upon, and the two Lutheran theological seminaries took upon themselves the responsibility to invite and prepare this conference during the year 1972.

However, unity with Lutherans or with other Christians is not and should not be the end of the road for the churches, especially not in Latin America. The main theme of the conference was not unity but "The Call of Christ and our Response". The main lecture was given by an Asian theologian, Dr. Adalbert Sitompul from Indonesia, a professor at the Nommensen University in Batakland. (It is significant that for the first time a representative of the so-called 'young churches' addressed the similarly younger 'sister churches' in Latin America!) He underlined an aspect which was also mentioned in the 'Lima Message' of six years earlier, but was at that time not so relevant as in José C. Paz: the church has to serve and serving means action. *Voz do Evangelho* reported about this lecture, in its October 1971 issue, in the following manner: "If the church



does not move and take concrete action, it will soon perish. 'The church should become a pioneer in releasing men oppressed . . . the church has no choice in its service; it is not permitted to serve the upper classes or special social groups.' With all men of good will it should engage itself in development, justice and human rights. The Fifth Latin American Lutheran Conference in José C. Paz began with this appeal to the participants."

The same article also referred to the lectures given in the discussion groups outlining how they understood the task of the churches in relation to their special fields of action: "In the group which dealt with the mission of the church, it was stated that mission is not a special task of the churches, because 'the church which lives by the gospel is missionary in its nature'. It was also emphasized that all baptized persons are commissioned for mission. Thus the work of mission is not accomplished by the institution, the church, but by the people of God, the believers. The goal of mission is in this case not the growth of church membership (in numbers), but the salvation of the individual human being.

On the other hand, the call of Christ does not want to isolate the believer, but rather lead him into the fellowship of his people. Therefore, mission can never be carried out without relating itself to the church or the religious community."

The same group also dealt with the structures of the church and came to the following conclusion: ". . . the church . . . cannot dispense with a minimum of organizational forms. These have the twofold purpose of making a Christian life together possible and of furthering the fulfilment of Christian mission through mutual advice, growth and training. For this reason, the structures of the church have a functional character and are subject to being constantly revised with regard to their efficacy."

But we Christians should not only remember the spiritual needs of our fellowmen, but become instruments of the Creator to help them to become real human beings. This theme was elaborated in a very extensive manner in the third discussion group, which dealt with the subject: "The Gospel and our Action". The same issue of *Voz do Evangelho* reported about the recommendations of this group in the following way: "An intensive discussion was provoked by the statement of the third working group.

. . . It consists of a confession of guilt which pronounces: 'We are guilty of failure in all our actions on behalf of man in Latin America.' The criticism was directed especially against the word 'all'. . . . The churches have pointed the way, even if very simply. Thus the plenary session judged the document presented as being too onesided and only interested in the political and social aspects. However, the group insisted upon the validity of its opinion by explaining that even the best efforts also include guilt. It underlined that the gospel in Latin America claims solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. It also demands from the churches that they stand on the side of those who are not masters of their own fate within their own nation. Another confession followed: 'We confess that we have failed in communicating the gospel of reconciliation.' The guilt of the churches is clearly prescribed. They have not helped the poor and have not recognized their responsibility in the political realm. . . .

In the debate about this report it became evident that the result of this discussion group could have been evaluated as the political activity of a minority. In addition to the criticism mentioned, the statement is theologically unclear and because of this, onesided. However, finally it was decided to entrust this, as well as all the other group reports, to the delegates for further study in the congregations."

It was not only the debate in connection with the third discussion group that resulted in critical remarks in the press about the conference, but also the other events of the meeting. A report published in a parish paper in the Caribbean area expressed the disappointment of a delegate that the planned evening program, "Lutheran Vision of Latin America" was cancelled. The same person also characterized the youth program scheduled for one evening as very problematic. Also some organizational defects were mentioned in several publications, which, however, can mostly be credited to the fact that the Lutheran churches in Argentina accepted the responsibility to invite the conference practically at the last moment, when it became evident that it could not be held in Brazil.

In an article about the conference, written by a layman in Brazil and published in *Igreja em Nossos Dias*, a Portuguese church monthly, other remarks were also published with the intention that in the future such deficiencies should be avoided: "The LWF

which carried the major portion of the costs for this Latin American conference and which was well represented numerically by members of its staff, was accorded only one hour in the program. This certainly must be seen as a lack of understanding of such a world organization on the part of the meeting.

Another regrettable aspect was the pathetically small percentage of laymen who took part in the conference. Perhaps this was the reason for the major portion of the time available being devoted to purely theological considerations. At medical and dental conventions or other professional meetings one attempts to emphasize the practical matters without thereby omitting the theoretical or research aspects. At such a church meeting one ought also to attempt to illustrate from the experience of each individual that which would add to the general enrichment.

... It appears to us to be imperative that in order to justify such undertakings in the future, the program must be shaped to include other elements than were evident at Buenos Aires. It is our responsibility as pastors and laymen who are responsible for the direction in which our Lutheran churches in Latin America will go to utilize better the possibilities that such meetings offer in order that we may learn the best possible way of bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to bear in our congregations and our surroundings, always taking into account the reality in which we live."

These last words might indicate that it was, after all, not unity which these Latin American conferences should achieve, but something else. Is it then justified to characterize them as another step toward unity?

If we consider the opposite of unity, disunity, as a serious hinderance to making the message of the church acceptable to human beings, we certainly have to yearn and work for the unity of all Christians. In this regard it is certainly justified that meetings be organized which promote this type of unity. However, the New Testament speaks also about another type of unity: the unity of the church with its Lord, the body with its head (Eph. 4:1-6). It is the hope of many that these Latin American Lutheran Conferences, as well as other Christian conferences in different parts of the world, also represent one step in the direction of this biblical unity: the unity of God's called people with their Lord.

## REPORT OF GROUP 1

In our group we agreed on the fact that the proclamation of the gospel is the announcement of the freedom of man, who is forgiven through Jesus Christ. This freedom consists in fellowship with God in order to surrender oneself to serve one's fellowman and the world. The proclamation of the gospel is fundamentally characterized by community life and service.

We believe that this feature has not received due attention in our preaching and ecclesiastical life. The gospel of forgiveness and justification has been interpreted very passively. We have thought that forgiveness is the reestablishment of community relationships between God and man, but we have not emphasized the fact that the gospel of forgiveness frees us to restore communication between every man on the basis of the forgiveness of sins.

How is this to be understood with regard to the reestablishment of unity in our divided Lutheran family and in the broader sphere of the Christian family?

We must begin acknowledging the errors and mistakes that influence our relationships within the Lutheran family and in the wider circle of the Christian family in order to grow in the freedom to forgive each other and share what is ours with others. Thus we shall attain a type of community life, in spite of our being separated due to traditional differences.

This freedom implies also the acceptance of an evangelical self-denial which commits us more fully to the service of the Lord on behalf of our fellowmen so that we come to know how to assume sacrifices as a result of our faith in the Lord.

Our liberation through the gospel qualifies us to assume an attitude of solidarity with the imperfections of our fellowmen, regardless of whether they are our brethren in faith or not.

In order to interpret this solidarity we must be willing to intercede to God for man and also to accept him in our fellowship.

We wish to confess the fact that in our inter-Lutheran relationships and in our relationships with the other Christians, we lack this freedom, and that we have to grow in it until we reach true unity, a unity that will



not necessarily be in conflict with the various traditions and organizations.

## REPORT OF GROUP 2

The church which lives by the gospel is missionary in its nature, because all those who have been baptized are entrusted with Christ's mission. It is our duty to remind the baptized person not only of his mission, but also to train him and equip him with the tools necessary for Christ's mission.

The mission of the baptized person embraces both proclamation and service, these being two expressions of Christian love and devotion. They may be distinguished from each other, but they must not be separated. To proclaim the gospel is to announce God's love for the sinner through Jesus Christ, who became our brother, and who lived, died and was raised from the dead for us. By means of this proclamation, man becomes reconciled to God and God confers upon him a new worth and the right to a new existence, which reveals itself in the ability to serve his neighbor.

As a result of this, the purpose of mission is the salvation of the whole man, in body and soul. This missionary goal involves the renewal of man in repentance and faith, thus allowing him to reach a new appraisal of the world, his neighbor and himself.

In spite of this new appraisal, the Christian continues being part of this world, being free to declare his solidarity with the concerns of society. This solidarity is limited, whenever God's rule and his will are being challenged or questioned.

Christ never isolates the man he calls, but integrates him into the fellowship of believers, the family of God. In this family the Christian is edified and equipped for his mission. A mission of this kind is never possible as a private enterprise apart from the family of God.

Being a community of persons, the church, both local and universal, analogous to any other society, cannot dispense with a minimum of organizational forms. These have the twofold purpose of making a Christian life together possible and of furthering the fulfillment of Christian mission through mutual advice, growth and training. For this reason, the structures of the church have a functional character and are subject to being constantly revised with regard to their efficacy.

The church must reflect in its way of being and action the fact that it lives by the gospel and the hope of God's kingdom. This will happen through the establishment of patterns of Christian living and action, which prefigure, although rudimentarily, the kingdom of God and illustrate the salvation of the whole human society as God intends.

The mission in Latin America is usually directed toward baptized persons. It must not be carried out as a type of proselytism. However, it is valid insofar as a person becomes conscious of what he is because of baptism.

## REPORT OF GROUP 3

### I.

We must confess that we are guilty of failure in all our actions on behalf of man in Latin America. We are in need of forgiveness and renewal.

We confess that we have failed in communicating the gospel of reconciliation (reconciliation is action).

In particular, we confess that we are guilty of:

not committing ourselves to act on behalf of the poor.

Not being willing to assume public responsibility:

we have done little or not enough on behalf of the illiterate;

we have done little or not enough with regard to the furtherance of just social laws offering identical opportunities for everyone;

we have been concerned little or not enough about providing suitable housing conditions for families;

we have done little or not enough with regard to the reconciling of classes in conflict;

we have been indifferent to any protest against institutionalized injustice and violence;

we have not taken action on behalf of those who are being politically, socially and culturally discriminated against.

### II.

The gospel of forgiveness, traditionally considered as a New Testament message, is a

means, a tool, and not an end in itself of God's saving design.

Its ultimate purpose is the calling of man in order to lead him to a new existence endowed with a basic attitude: love for one's neighbor, as shown in the life and work of Jesus Christ.

This creative urge takes on the form of living, of Christian discipleship, in which man tries to attain at different levels—individual, community, school, congregational, labor and politico-structural—the fulfilment of his being as the only thing that is valuable, as opposed to any destructive urge man may be confronted with, be it within himself or outside of himself.

The proclamation of the gospel is precisely the liberating action initiated by our Lord Jesus Christ. This action compels his community to integrate with it and to continue it. Therefore, these are not just the empty words of theological jargon. They have in view the saving of the whole man, thus creating conditions that render possible a genuine human existence. The church as institution is not able to carry out these actions, but it must support and stimulate them directly as well as indirectly.

The freeing action does not mean that we have to be neutral. Rather, it incites solidarity with the oppressed and demands a radical commitment. This implies that we must carry out our actions on behalf of those who as a nation or as a part of it are not masters of their destiny without taking into account the consequences. In other words, we have in mind the people who, instead of being the actors of history, are merely its objects.

### III.

#### *Recommendations:*

On the basis of the experience attained in the course of this conference and with a view to implementing the foregoing declaration, we suggest:

That the churches urgently examine themselves in order to discern if their life is really serving the full liberation of man. This not being the case, there is need of thorough study and the advice of experts in these matters in order that steps be taken conducive to this end.

That the next meetings be prepared sufficiently in advance and with the attendance of people *qualified* in all the areas to be discussed.

#### REPORT OF GROUP 4

Group 4, in discussing "The Gospel and our Unity", the lecture delivered by Dr. H. Meyer, agreed, after long and thorough discussion, to submit to the plenary of the Fifth Latin American Lutheran Conference the following:

Whereas we as Lutheran churches acknowledge the urgency of God's calling in Christ in order to bear witness to the world,

and whereas this witness would be of greater impact among men if it were a unified witness,

we reaffirm our will to pursue and deepen the dialog between our churches in order to draw the Lutheran family closer together.

In order to express this will to engage in dialog, we wish to suggest a methodology which includes two aspects we consider complementary, namely:

it is assumed that theological consensus is essential for the unity of the church, this consensus exists between our churches with regard to fundamental issues concerning the idea of gospel and sacraments;

in accordance with the present consensus and subsequent advancements, we must seek definite opportunities for a communion of life.

In the search for the theological consensus, it is always one and the same gospel, the purity of which must be guarded against distortions. But we must take into account three features:

the variety of situations this unique gospel is confronted with, situations which may require different ways of expression;

in the presentation of the gospel in different situations we employ concepts belonging to the human language, which, in spite of differences as to their appearance, express the same gospel;

in order to reach theological consensus, we must remember that according to the thought of the Reformers we cannot place all the articles of faith at the same level. There are



articles of faith on the unity of which the being or not being of the church depends, but this is not true of all the articles.

In order to further more fully the purpose of engaging in dialog, we recommend that in each area attempts be made to further inter-Lutheran dialog and the dialog with other churches as far as it is possible. It is obvious that inter-Lutheran dialog must be attempted first and foremost, although diverse dialogs are not to be excluded at the same time.

Dialog must take place, as far as possible, at all the structural levels, i.e., not only at the top but also the intermediate levels and at the congregational niveau.

We acknowledge that the Church of Christ in its unity and catholicity is present in every local church in which the gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are correctly

administered. This universal understanding urges individual Lutheran churches, whenever they become aware of their fellowship, to break out of their isolation and seek relationships that reach beyond the local and regional restrictions and surpass the ethnic, socio-political, economic and cultural frontiers.

As a starting point for the attainment of what has been suggested in the previous paragraph.

*We recommend:* In view of the importance of the documents concerning the dialogs in the USA and Europe (Lutheran-Reformed, Lutheran-Catholic, etc.) for similar dialogs in Latin America, we ask the LWF to put these documents at the disposal of the Latin American churches (e.g., through regional councils), provide for their publication in Spanish and Portuguese, both for local use by periodicals and for groups of study (pastors and laymen).

## Report of the Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission on "The Gospel and the Church"

This is the final report of the Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission on "The Gospel and the Church". Interim reports of the previous meetings are to be found in *Lutheran World*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, 1969, pp. 363-379 (1st and 2nd meetings) and *Lutheran World*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1971, pp. 161-187 (3rd and 4th meetings). The following report was formulated at the fifth and final meeting at Malta, February 1971. Four *Special Statements* are appended at the conclusion. The official version of the document is in German.

### Preface

The text which follows is the report of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission appointed by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation. Under the general theme of "The Gospel and the Church" this commission discussed the theological questions which are of essential significance for the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches. The Study Commission formulated and accepted this report as a summary of its work. The general theme was formulated in so broad a way as to make it impossible for certain problems to be treated in detail. The appended *Special Statements* are to be considered as part of the report. They indicate where members of the commission felt they had to abstain or to modify the positions taken.

The report has been submitted to the appropriate church authorities as the outcome of the commission's work. Now it is being offered to the churches with a recommendation for thorough study. It is hoped that the work of the Study Commission will contribute to further clarification and improvement of relationships between the Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church. This report has no binding character for the churches.

Rome and Geneva,  
February 9, 1972.

André Appel  
General Secretary,  
Lutheran World  
Federation

Jan Willebrands  
President, Secretariat for  
Promoting Christian Unity

## INTRODUCTION

(1) Contact established between the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church on the occasion of the Second Vatican Council led to the formation of a "Lutheran/Roman Catholic Working Group" which met in Strasbourg in August 1965 and April 1966. It was officially authorized by both parties and discussed the question of possible contacts, conversations and forms of cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Both delegations were convinced that the traditionally disputed theological issues between Catholics and Lutherans are still of importance but that these appear in a different light "through the emergence of the modern world" and because of new insights in the natural, social and historical sciences and in biblical theology. In view of these new insights the delegations, therefore, agreed to "engage in serious discussions on theological issues" and thus to "identify and eliminate misunderstandings and causes of irritation".<sup>2</sup> They agreed that it is not of primary importance to look for quick solutions to practical problems but rather to enter into a comprehensive dialog about the basic problems which both separate and unite the two churches.

(3) For this purpose the appropriate church authorities appointed a study commission of international composition and assigned to it the topic, "The Gospel and the Church". In addition to the regular members, special participants were invited to individual sessions as theological experts on particular themes.

(4) The first session, held November 26-30, 1967 in Zurich, Switzerland, dealt with "Gospel and Tradition". The reason for choosing to start with this biblical-theological question of the gospel and its transmission in the New Testament was that it could be anticipated, on the basis of general experience in interconfessional encounters, especially between Protestant and Catholic theologians, that the chances of agreement would be particularly great in biblical-exegetical discussions. Further, the report of the joint working group had pointed out that the "development of modern biblical scholarship has modified the traditional formulations of the respective positions and opened a new approach to the confessional differences".<sup>3</sup> For

its second session held September 15-19, 1968 in Båstad, Sweden, the study commission decided on the theme of "World and Church under the Gospel". In doing so the commission built on the recognition in the first session that in order for the gospel, as saving event, to remain the same in every historical situation, it must always be proclaimed anew. Gospel and church cannot therefore be adequately defined apart from reference to the world. In addition, the study commission hoped that both churches could find a new unity in common service to the world.

(5) After having thus traced and clarified the broad outlines of its assigned topic, the study commission was able to turn to more specifically ecclesiological problems in its next two sessions. Here the outstanding questions between the two confessions are particularly urgent. Under the theme "The Structures of the Church", the third session, meeting May 4-8, 1969 in Nemi, Italy, focused especially on the problem of ecclesiastical office. The fourth session met February 22-26, 1970 in Cartigny, Switzerland and, under the theme "Gospel and Law—Gospel and Christian Freedom" carried further the discussion of the themes raised at Nemi, adverting in this connection also to the questions of papal primacy and intercommunion.

(6) The fifth session held February 21-26, 1971 in San Anton, Malta was chiefly devoted to composing a comprehensive final report. A small subcommittee had met October 27-30, 1970 in Hamburg to prepare a preliminary draft. After a thorough reworking of this draft, the final report was adopted unanimously by the study commission on February 25, 1971. The study commission appointed a small editorial committee which held a meeting in Tübingen, May 28-30, 1971. Its assignment was simply to make necessary editorial changes taking into consideration individual suggestions by members of the study commission.

(7) In evaluating the present report it is important to recognize that it was not the task of the study commission to deal with the theological controversies of the 16th century as such; rather the commission was to examine once again the confessional differences in the light of contemporary biblical theology and church history as well as of perspectives opened up by the Second Vatican Council. For such purposes the concept "gospel" has become a key concept in ecumenical dialog. This fact has also affected the choice of theme. The theme "The Gospel and the Church" was intentionally kept general

<sup>1</sup> See "Joint Report of the Roman Catholic/Lutheran Working Group" in *Lutheran World*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1966, p. 436 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 437.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 437.



in order to make possible the discussion of a variety of controversial points.

(8) By and large, the members of the study commission are convinced that within the framework of their theme they have achieved a noteworthy and far-reaching consensus. This consensus extends not only to the theological understanding of the gospel of its basic and normative importance for the church and of its christological and soteriological center but also to closely related and highly important points of doctrine which until now have been controversial. Undoubtedly some questions require further clarification. Yet we ask ourselves whether the still remaining differences must be viewed as hinderances to church fellowship. Are not the differences cutting across church lines, arising from diverse response to contemporary challenges at least as great as the traditional differences between the Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church? These questions concern all of us together even if we approach them from different starting points and they can be answered only through a common effort.

(9) The study commission however is also conscious of the limitations of its work. As the theme assigned to it imposed restrictions on its approach, some of the problems under consideration could not be discussed in a theologically comprehensive way. Other questions, as for example the problem of papal infallibility, were discussed to some extent, but were not included in this report. In part this was due to a lack of time. Among the theologically disputed points which were not expressly considered by the study commission we would like to mention the following: the relationship of church and gospel to the sacraments; the relationship between faith and sacraments; the relationship of nature and grace and of law and gospel; the question of the teaching office; the question of Mariology. Our experience, however, has shown that the common discussion of such questions can lead to solutions which previously could not have been automatically anticipated.

(10) Some themes discussed by us should be treated more comprehensively than was possible for the study commission. That is true above all of the theme "The Gospel and the World". Comprehensive treatment of this problem would have called for a type of expertise not represented in our commission. For an adequate theological consideration of these questions, such disciplines as ethics, sociology and psychology among others

have a more than auxiliary function for theology. Further, a full understanding of the concept of gospel requires greater attention to the Old Testament. To be sure, in the present report this concept is in no way limited to the New Testament gospels nor identified with them. Yet a more intensive study of the witness of the Old Testament would lead to further insight.

(11) Interconfessional conversations have their own peculiar problems. This became apparent in our conversations also. Often the problems were stated in a way derived from the manner of inquiry characteristic of the tradition of only one of the two churches. To be sure, this can be challenging and fruitful to the other partner and lead him to a deeper understanding of his own tradition. Here, however, there often arises the difficulty of finding a verbal formulation acceptable to both sides. Often the dogmatic conceptualizations customary to a tradition must be avoided, even when treating those matters with which these conceptualizations were intended to deal. There is a special difficulty for Lutherans in that it is often hard to give an authoritative characterization of the present Lutheran understanding of the faith. While Catholics can point to recent magisterial statements, especially those of the Second Vatican Council, Lutherans must always refer back to the 16th century confessions. This makes it difficult to present authoritatively the diversity, freedom and strengths of the actual life and witness to the faith in today's Lutheran churches.

(12) The limitations of the work of the study commission can be partially off-set by submitting the present report to as broad as possible a discussion among the churches. The work of international ecumenical commissions should be supplemented by work on regional levels. The results of such work could then be submitted to similar groups in other lands and cultural areas and finally evaluated by an international commission.

(13) The present report presents the convictions and insights of the study commission. These were gradually formed over the course of a four-year dialog. Although the commission had an official assignment, it is nevertheless aware that the result of its work has no binding character for the churches. It submits this report to the appropriate church authorities with the hope that it will contribute to the clarification and improvement of the relations between Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

# I. The Gospel and Tradition

## A) *The question of the gospel*

(14) The break between Lutherans and Catholics had numerous causes rooted in the peculiar historical situations of the 16th century. Yet ultimately Lutherans and Catholics separated over the issue of the right understanding of the gospel. Although the historical situation has changed extensively, they are even today convinced that their respective traditions contain elements which cannot be abandoned. The unity of the church can be a unity only in the truth of the gospel. Therefore we ask, how can we understand and actualize the gospel today?

(15) In dealing with this decisive question, it became apparent from the very beginning that it is impossible for us to simply repeat the traditional controversial theological positions. Not only have there been changes in the historical situation in which these arose, but also theological methods and ways of stating questions have been profoundly altered by modern biblical and historical research. A new view of the confessional differences has developed. Therefore the question of the gospel must be raised anew from the perspective of contemporary theology and ecclesiology.

## B) *Jesus' proclamation and the primitive Christian kerygma*

(16) The point of departure for our deliberations was the question of the relationship of the primitive kerygma to Jesus' proclamation. Here there was agreement that the life and proclamation of Jesus are accessible only through the primitive Christian tradition. Yet the participants differed in their evaluation of the possibility of reconstructing the life and proclamation of Jesus as well as on the question of continuity in the preaching of the gospel. However, there was consensus that the gospel rests fundamentally on the witness to the Easter event. What God has done for the salvation of the world in Jesus Christ is transmitted in the gospel and made present in the Holy Spirit. The gospel as proclamation of God's saving action is therefore itself a salvation event.

(17) From the very beginning, the gospel of Jesus Christ was the subject matter of the tradition.<sup>4</sup> Out of and in the service of the proclamation of the gospel, certain writings

were composed which were later designated as the New Testament. This poses the old controversial question regarding the relationship of Scripture and tradition in a new way. The Scripture can no longer be exclusively contrasted with tradition, because the New Testament itself is the product of primitive tradition. Yet as the witness to the fundamental tradition, Scripture has a normative role for the entire later tradition of the church.<sup>5</sup>

## C) *Criteria for the church's proclamation*

(18) Since testimony must be given to the gospel in constantly new historical situations, there arises the question of the criteria by means of which one may distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate later developments. This question can not be answered in a purely theoretical manner. Neither the *sola scriptura* nor formal references to the authoritativeness of the magisterial office are sufficient. The primary criterion is the Holy Spirit making the Christ event into a saving action. To be sure, this raises the question of how the power of the Holy Spirit can be concretely identified as criterion. If the continuity of tradition with its original source is to be concretely manifest, then obviously secondary criteria are necessary.

(19) In the Lutheran view the living word of preaching is the normal form of authoritative interpretation of the gospel. The Confessions of the church possess authority as a correct interpretation of Scripture. In special situations (cf. the *Kirchenkampf*) the church as the people of God may be led to confess the gospel afresh and with authority in reference to new questions.

(20) In the Catholic view, the Lord authenticates his word through the reciprocal interaction of official and unofficial charisma, both of which remain under Scripture.<sup>6</sup> Since the gospel is constantly interpreted in faith and life, the living faith-experiences of Christians constitute a secondary criterion. In this way, the church is kept in fundamental faithfulness to Christ and his truth and is brought to renewal again and again. It receives the liberty to free itself from forms and formulations which are no longer timely, in order that the gospel might be preached in ways appropriate to current situations.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 10 and 24.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 15:3; also 1 Cor. 11:2 & 23; Luke 1:2.



(21) Participants on both sides agreed that the authority of the church can only be service of the word and that it is not master of the word of the Lord. Therefore the church's tradition must remain open to the word and must transmit it in such a way that the word constantly bestows the understanding which comes from faith and freedom for Christian action.

(22) In spite of this historical variability of proclamation, Lutherans and Catholics are convinced that the Holy Spirit unceasingly leads and keeps the church in the truth. It is in this context that one must understand the concepts of indefectibility and infallibility which are current in the Catholic tradition. These two predominantly negative concepts are subject to misunderstanding. Although they are of late origin, that to which they refer was known in the ancient church and they are based on an interpretation of New Testament texts.<sup>7</sup>

(23) Infallibility must, first of all, be understood as a gift to the entire church as the people of God. The church's abiding in the truth should not be understood in a static way but as a dynamic event which takes place with the aid of the Holy Spirit in ceaseless battle against error and sin in the church as well as in the world.

#### D) *The center of the gospel and the hierarchy of truths*

(24) Concern for an abiding truth within the diversity of traditions leads to the question of what is that foundation and center of the gospel in relation to which the manifold witness of the church in various historical situations can be conceived as testimony and development. This foundation and this center cannot be reduced to a theological formula, but rather is constituted by the eschatological saving act of God in Jesus' cross and resurrection. It is this which all proclamation seeks to explicate.

(25) The discussion made evident a certain convergence of the Catholic idea of the hierarchy of truths and the Lutheran understanding of the gospel in relation to the central events to which it witnesses. The concept of the hierarchy of truths<sup>8</sup> enables Catholic theology instead of viewing all truths of faith as on the same plane, to introduce a consideration of their actual content, and thus makes evident the different levels or degrees

of importance of individual truths of faith. At the same time, all truths of faith, whatever the level to which they are assigned, are given a common reference point in the foundation of the Christian faith. This brings the idea of the hierarchy of truths very close to that of the center of the gospel. To be sure, the obvious closeness does not eliminate differing emphases. While in the case of the idea of the hierarchy of truths, the aspect of completeness and fullness emerges more strongly, there is a stronger critical stress implied by the idea of the center, especially when one considers its use in the history of theology. On the basis of this it suggests that church traditions must ask themselves whether they rightly testify to the gospel.

#### E) *The problem of the doctrine of justification*

(26) Out of the question about the center of the gospel, arises the question of how the two sides understand justification. At this point the traditional polemical disagreements were especially sharply defined. Today, however, a far-reaching consensus is developing in the interpretation of justification. Catholic theologians also emphasize in reference to justification that God's gift of salvation for the believer is unconditional as far as human accomplishments are concerned. Lutheran theologians emphasize that the event of justification is not limited to individual forgiveness of sins, and they do not see in it a purely external declaration of the justification of the sinner.<sup>9</sup> Rather the righteousness of God actualized in the Christ event is conveyed to the sinner through the message of justification as an encompassing reality basic to the new life of the believer.<sup>10</sup>

(27) In this sense justification can be understood as expressing the totality of the event of salvation. One should, however, not fail to recognize that in Paul's writings the comprehensive witness to God's righteousness is sharpened by his concrete dispute with Jewish legalism. As the message of justification is the foundation of Christian freedom in opposition to legalistic conditions for the reception of salvation, it must be articulated ever anew as an important interpretation of the center of the gospel. But it was also pointed out that the event of salvation to which the gospel testifies can also be expressed comprehensively in other representations derived from the New Testament, such as reconciliation, freedom, redemption, new life and new creation.

<sup>7</sup> John 16:13, *inter alia*.

<sup>8</sup> See Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. 1:16; 3:26; 5:17.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 1:16f; 3:21f; 5:17; 6:7; 1 Cor. 6:11.

(28) Although a far-reaching agreement in the understanding of the doctrine of justification appears possible, other questions arise here. What is the theological importance of this doctrine? Do both sides similarly evaluate its implications for the life and teaching of the church?

(29) According to Lutheran understanding, and on the basis of the confession of justification, all traditions and institutions of the church are subject to the criterion which asks whether they are enablers of the proper proclamation of the gospel and do not obscure the unconditional character of the gift of salvation. It follows that the rites and orders of the church are not to be imposed as conditions for salvation, but are valid only as the free unfolding of the obedience of faith.<sup>11</sup>

(30) Lutherans and Catholics alike are convinced that the gospel is the foundation of Christian freedom. In the New Testament this freedom is described as freedom from sin, freedom from the power of the law, freedom from death and freedom for service toward God and neighbor. Since, however, Christian freedom is linked to the witness of the gospel, it needs institutional forms for its mediation. The church must therefore understand and actualize itself as institution of freedom. Structures which violate this freedom cannot be legitimate in the church of Christ.

#### F) The gospel and church law

(31) Church orders arise, above all, from that ministry of word and sacrament which is constitutive for the church. That which belongs to the proper proclamation of the gospel and proper administration of the sacraments is indispensable. The concrete shape of orders is presented in the New Testament in various forms. In subsequent history it has undergone many further changes. Greater awareness of the historicity of the church in conjunction with a new understanding of its eschatological nature, requires that in our day the concepts of *ius divinum* and *ius humanum* be thought through anew. In both concepts the word *ius* is employed in a merely analogical sense. *Ius divinum* can never be adequately distinguished from *ius humanum*. We have the *ius divinum* always only as mediated through particular historical forms. These mediating forms must be understood not only as the product of a sociological process of growth but, because of the

pneumatic nature of the church, they can be experienced also as fruit of the spirit.

(32) Church law is not a mere juridical system. The final decisive viewpoint must be that of the salvation of the individual believer. Church law must serve the free development of the religious life of the believer. Church norms can be of help for the formation of conscience. No law, however, may release a member of the church from his direct responsibility to God.<sup>12</sup> Church norms, therefore, can become binding only through the personal conscience. The area of freedom for the work of the Lord must remain open.

(33) The church is permanently bound in its ordering to the gospel which is irrevocably prior to it. It is in respect to this that Catholic tradition speaks of the *ius divinum*. The gospel, however, can be the criterion for a concrete church order only in living relationship with contemporary social realities. Just as there is a legitimate explication of the gospel in dogmas and confessions, so there also exists a historical actualization of law in the church. Therefore, the church must discern the signs of the Holy Spirit in history and in the present, and in faithfulness to the apostolic proclamation must consider the restructuring of its orders.<sup>13</sup>

(34) The Catholic participants, therefore, expect the reform of church law to proceed in such a way that the function of laws and institutions in the church will be to serve the religious life of the believers, protect Christian freedom and the rights of the person and prevent laws and institutions from ever becoming ends in themselves. For the Lutheran participants, it is a hopeful sign that the revision of the *Codex Iuris Canonici* is being carried out at a time of ecumenical rapprochement. They further hope that it will be remembered in making this revision that, although the codification of Catholic church law is of binding character only for the members of the Catholic church, it nevertheless has an indirect effect on all of Christendom. In addition they acknowledge that in many respects the structures of their own Lutheran churches are in need of radical re-ordering so that freedom may be further protected and promoted.

#### II. The Gospel and the World

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom, 2:10-12.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Augsburg Confession, VII.



### A) *The importance of the world for the understanding of the gospel*

(35) It is in the world and for the sake of the world that Christ lived, died and rose again. Likewise, it is in the world and for the sake of the world that the church witnesses to these saving acts of God. The world is both the *locus* and the goal of the proclamation of the gospel. These realities are so intimately interrelated that what the world is and how we understand it, inevitably influences the formulation of the gospel and the life and structures of the church.

(36) In discussing this theme we realize anew that many doctrinal disagreements, which in the past have separated our churches, are beginning to disappear. Those controversies arose in a world very different from the present. Consequently it has become to a large extent impossible to make use of a past understanding of the world in the context of our present proclamation. Thus many of our traditional doctrinal disagreements are losing importance.

(37) This does not mean, however, that we now possess a new and uniform "theology of earthly realities". There are far too many new problems. It is very difficult to even arrive at a clear-cut definition of the concept "world". Special attention needs to be called to such meanings of the concept of world as cosmos, as the network of social and cultural relationships, as *locus* and object of human activity—individually and corporately—and, finally, as the created, fallen and divinely-redeemed order.

(38) The similarities and differences of opinion in this area, perhaps more than anywhere else, cut across confessional lines. Roman Catholics and Lutherans are here confronted with the same fundamental questions and have similar difficulties in trying to answer them.

### B) *The importance of the gospel for the world*

(39) We came to the agreement that the world must be viewed from the center of the gospel, that is, from the perspective of God's eschatological, saving act in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The gospel aims for the reconciliation of all men. Two important conclusions can be drawn from this.

(40) First, God's redemptive act in Christ takes place on and through the cross. There is here no room for the triumphalism and

theocratic tendencies to which Christians have so often fallen victim. The church must ever remember that Christ's victory in and over the world continues to be a hidden one and that it must witness to Christ's work of reconciliation in such a way as to share in his sufferings by struggling against the powers of evil in this age which is passing away. It must witness to God's saving acts not only through word and sacrament, not only through the verbal proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, but also by following Christ in bearing the weaknesses of the weak and identifying with the needy and oppressed. For the gospel is more than a message. It reveals the power of the eschaton already at work in our world under the form of the cross.<sup>14</sup>

(41) Secondly, the gospel applies to all domains of being and to all aspects of human life. Christ's victory through his death and resurrection encourages believers to live by his promise and to perform works of love. We are thereby warned against all dualistic patterns of piety and thought. The gospel cannot be confined to a purely spiritual, private or inward sphere which has no consequences for bodily or public life. Contrary to a certain Catholic tradition, "nature" cannot be conceived as the self-sufficient presupposition for supernatural grace. At the same time we must reject the notion, corresponding to a widespread Lutheran way of thinking, of a "worldly kingdom" which has no relationship to the gospel.

### C) *The historicity of the gospel*

(42) In our day all reality is seen as an open-ended process and, in reference to mankind, as history. Here is our confession of faith: in his love for the world God enters into history and makes it part of his saving act. This has always been part of the belief in the incarnation. Today, however, it becomes necessary to conceive of this historicity of the gospel more clearly.

(43) Although the gospel cannot be derived from the world, it must nevertheless be recognized that it is concretized only in specific and ever-changing circumstances. It becomes the *viva vox evangelii* only when it is formulated and expressed through the power of the Holy Spirit in reference to the ever new questions raised by men of today.<sup>15</sup> Only when the gospel is proclaimed for such spe-

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 37 & 38.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 44.

cific situations do we grasp its saving character. Thus the world not only provides opportunities for the communication of the gospel, but it also has a hermeneutical function. It is this very world which to a certain extent enriches us with a deeper understanding of the fullness of the gospel.

(44) From this it also follows that the structures and formulations in which the gospel is concretized share in the historical conditionedness of the world in its social and cultural transformations. Since the gospel is directed toward the eschatological fulfilment, these structures and formulations are simultaneously transitory and anticipatory. Their role is to open up the future and not be closed to it. Thus the continuity of the gospel—a gift of the Holy Spirit—is to be seen, not only in fixed structures and formulations, but also in its ability to make itself known in ever new forms by constant reflections on Holy Scripture and on its interpretation in the church's history. This insight also frees ecumenical dialog from an unquestioning attachment to the fixed positions and dominant problems of the past.

(45) There is a further reason why special attention must be given to the relationship of the world to the gospel. We view this world as a global environment in which all factors influence each other. The church stands in the midst of this complex of reciprocal interrelations which, albeit unconsciously, often shape the communication of the gospel, just as this communication of the gospel also shapes and influences the world. This also frequently happens in ways of which neither the world nor the church is aware. At times the church's indirect communication through its style of life and organization is more powerful than its direct witness through word, sacrament and social action. At other times, this indirect message contradicts the gospel which the church intends to proclaim. Conversely, however, it can also happen that certain aspects of the gospel may be conveyed even where there is no awareness or intention of doing so. When reflecting on the proclamation of the gospel it is, therefore, imperative also to consider the actual social, psychological and political function of the churches in our society. In a secularized world the churches have been increasingly forced into the private sphere of things. Consequently they play an increasingly less effective, less central role in public life, whereas the gospel they proclaim concerns itself with life in its totality. At least one of the reasons for this failure is that the churches' are burdened with life styles and organizational patterns which may have been

appropriate in the 'folk church' era, but which in our increasingly de-Christianized society have become useless, if not harmful. A vast transformation is needed for our churches to become communities which provide the appropriate institutional and spiritual conditions for the concrete actualization of true freedom, human dignity and unity among their members. In divesting all ideologies and forms of political, social and economic life of their claims to absoluteness, the church is enabled to contribute more effectively toward an opening of the world to the future. The entire life of the church, and not only its pronouncements and programs, must become a protest against the inhuman aspects of society.

(46) The ecumenical importance of these considerations is evident. The relationship of the world to the gospel points to the necessity of new structures for our churches. Given the charismatic total structure of the church, it was asked whether the function of the office holders could not be understood and organized in new ways and thereby enhance the importance of the priesthood of all believers. The task over against the world requires opportunities for freedom and public opinion within the church. Such new structures provide possibilities for the removal of major barriers to unity. For with the progressive overcoming of doctrinal disputes, it is now precisely structural problems which are largely responsible for continuing to keep our churches divided. With this comment concerning the relationship of the world to the gospel we now turn our attention to the problem of the office of ministry in the church.

### III. The Gospel and the Office of the Ministry in the Church<sup>16</sup>

#### A) *The common point of departure*

(47) The question of the office of the ministry in the church, its origin, its position and correct understanding represents one of the most important open questions between Lutherans and Catholics. It is here that the question of the position of the gospel in and over the church becomes concrete. What, in other words, are the consequences of the doctrine of justification for the understanding of the ministerial office?

<sup>16</sup> The most complete treatment of this theme so far within the context of Catholic-Lutheran conversations has taken place in North America. See *Eucharist and Ministry, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV* (New York: USA National Committee of the LWF; Washington: US Catholic Conference, 1971).



(48) Lutherans and Catholics share the conviction that we owe our salvation exclusively to the saving act of God accomplished once for all in Jesus Christ according to the witness of the gospel. Yet the ministry of reconciliation belongs to the work of reconciliation.<sup>17</sup> In other words the witness of the gospel requires that there be witnesses to the gospel.<sup>18</sup> The church as a whole bears witness to Christ; the church as a whole is the priestly people of God.<sup>19</sup> As *creatura et ministra verbi*, however, it stands under the gospel and has the gospel as its superordinate criterion. Its gospel ministry is to be carried out through the proclamation of the word, through the administration of the sacraments, and, indeed, through its total life.

(49) Since the church as the pilgrim people of God has not yet reached its eschatological goal, it depends during the present interval of time—between the “already” and the “not-yet” on ministries, structures and orders which should serve the realization of the saving act of God in Christ.

(50) The correct determination of the relationship between this ministry assigned to the entire church and a special office in the church is a problem for Lutherans and Catholics alike. Both agree that the office of the ministry stands over against the community as well as within the community. Further they agree that the ministerial office represents Christ and his over-againstness to the community only insofar as it gives expression to the gospel. Both must examine themselves as to how effectively the critical superiority of the gospel is maintained in practice.

#### B) *The normative position of its origin*

(51) The New Testament testifies to these points in many ways. Especially important and helpful for our present problem is the concept of the apostolic as well as the charismatic structure of the congregations as portrayed especially in Paul's letters.<sup>20</sup>

(52) According to the New Testament wit-

nesses the apostles were sent by the Lord himself as witnesses of his resurrection.<sup>21</sup> The apostolate in the strict sense is not transferable. The apostles belong to the time of the original establishment of the church,<sup>22</sup> are of fundamental importance for the church,<sup>23</sup> and—together with the Christian prophets—can be designated as the foundation of the church.<sup>24</sup> The church is apostolic insofar as it stands on this foundation and abides in the apostolic faith. The church's ministry, doctrine and order are apostolic insofar as they pass on and actualize the apostolic witness.

(53) The commission of the whole church, going back to the apostles, is carried out through a variety of charisms. These are manifestations of the Holy Spirit and make us participants in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup> Therefore the charisms are not given to only a particular group in the church nor are they limited only to its offices.<sup>26</sup> They exhibit their authenticity in that they testify to Christ<sup>27</sup> and are for others, thus serving the unity and building-up of the body of Christ.<sup>28</sup> Therefore the charisms are of constitutive importance for the order and structure of the church. The gospel can be maintained only in the cooperative and at times also tension-filled interaction of the various charisms and ministries.<sup>29</sup>

(54) We are told quite early in the New Testament period of special ministries and offices.<sup>30</sup> To some extent at least they were viewed as charisms.<sup>31</sup> The New Testament writings testify to the great differences in congregational functions, ministries and orders in the various areas and periods of the church. These were only partially retained in later church history and they were partially interpreted in new ways (cf. the offices of presbyter, bishop and deacon). Further, these ministries and orders were imbedded in earlier historical (Jewish, Hellenistic, etc.) structures. Thus, although there is a continuity of basic structure, it can be seen that historicity is part of the essential nature of the church's ministerial office and of its congregational

<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor. 9:1; Acts 1:22.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Cor. 15:7.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. 3:10 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Eph. 2:20; cf. Rev. 21:14.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-6.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-11; Rom. 12:3.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 12:3.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11-16.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. 1 Thess. 5:12; Phil. 1:1.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 12:28.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Cor. 5:18.

<sup>18</sup> Rom. 10:14-17.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 10-12; Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 2-3; also *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia Edition), “An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility”, p. 52 (WA 6, 407); cf. further WA 38, 247.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; cf. Eph. 4:7-12.

ordering. The gospel as witnessed to by Scripture can be criterion for church order only when it stands in living relationship to the current social realities. Orders in the New Testament are, therefore, to be seen largely as models which are open to ever new actualizations.

### C) *Historical development of church structures*

(55) During the course of the church's history, the understanding and shaping of the ministerial office has undergone considerable change and development. Only in recent years have we become fully aware of this in our study of history. It was not until the second century that the three-fold division of the ministerial office into bishop, presbyter and deacon finally came about. The relationship of the local to the universal church, of episcopal collegiality to primacy, shifted significantly between the first and second millennia. To some extent the various churches are differentiated by their development of differing New Testament models.

(56) These insights into the historicity of the church, combined with a new understanding of the eschatological nature of the church, have led also to changes in the theological understanding of the office of the ministry in the church. Although the ministerial office belongs constitutively to the church and has a continuing basic structure, still it is possible for concrete forms of office, which were necessary and important at a specific time for the proper carrying out of the church's mission, to be of no or little value in other situations. This enables us today also to undertake restructuring in order to adapt to new situations. In so doing, old structures, as for example, the office of deacon, can be renewed and new structures can emerge. Especially is there great need today to consider the prophetic function of the church towards the world and the structural consequences of this for the church. The exercise of the prophetic function demands an area of freedom and of public opinion within the church.

### D) *The understanding of apostolic succession*

(57) The basic intention of the doctrine of apostolic succession is to indicate that, throughout all historical changes in its proclamation and structures, the church is at all times referred back to its apostolic origin. The details of this doctrine seem to us today to be more complicated than before. In the New Testament and the early fathers, the emphasis was obviously placed more on the

substance of apostolicity, i.e., on succession in apostolic teaching. In this sense the entire church as the *ecclesia apostolica* stands in the apostolic succession. Within this general sense of succession, there is a more specific meaning: the succession of the uninterrupted line of the transmission of office. In the early church, primarily in connection with defence against heresies, it was a sign of the unimpaired transmission of the gospel and a sign of unity in the faith. It is in these terms that Catholics today are trying once again to develop a deeper understanding of apostolic succession in the ministerial office. Lutherans on their side can grant the importance of a special succession if the preeminence of succession in teaching is recognized and if the uninterrupted line of transmission of office is not viewed as an *ipso facto* certain guarantee of the continuity of the right proclamation of the gospel.

(58) It can also be of ecumenical importance to indicate that the Catholic tradition knows of individual instances of the ordination of priests by priests which were recognized as valid. It still needs to be clarified to what extent this leaves open the possibility of a presbyterial succession.<sup>32</sup>

### E) *Toward a new interpretation of the traditional teaching on the ministerial office*

(59) Today it is possible for us to have a better understanding of various traditional elements in the doctrine of the office of the ministry as this has developed on both sides. We see more clearly than before that the question of whether ordination is a sacrament is chiefly a matter of terminology. Catholics view ordination as a sacrament which graciously equips the office bearer for ministry to others. Lutherans customarily limit usage of the word "sacrament" to baptism and the Lord's Supper (at times also absolution).<sup>33</sup> In practice, however, transmission of office proceeds in both churches in a similar manner, that is, through the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit for his gifts for the proper exercise of min-

<sup>32</sup> Cf. C. Baisi, *Il Ministro straordinario degli ordini sacramentali* (Rome: 1935); Y. Congar, *Heilige Kirche* (Stuttgart: Schwabenverlag, 1966), pp. 285-316; P. Fransen, in *Sacramentum Mundi*, IV, 1969, col. 1270f; W. Kasper, "Zur Frage der Anerkennung der Ämter in den lutherischen Kirchen", in *Theol. Quartalschrift* (Tübingen), Vol. 151, 1971, pp. 97-109.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Augsburg Confession, XIII, and Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XIII.



istry. In spite of all still remaining differences, there is here a substantial convergence.

F) *The possibility of a mutual recognition of the ministerial office*

(60) A certain rapprochement can be noticed also because of a change in the Catholic understanding of "priestly character". According to the original Augustinian understanding, this had to do with the outward call and ordination to public office in the church. Later, however, there was a shift to understanding this "character" as an inner qualification of the person, and it was in this sense that it was rejected by the Reformers. In defence against a onesided metaphysical understanding, many Catholic theologians today emphasize a more strongly functional conception which is more acceptable to Lutherans. Furthermore, Lutherans in practice have the equivalent of the Catholic doctrine of the "priestly character" to the extent that they do not repeat ordination. In both churches, to be sure, there is also the problem of how the preeminence of the gospel can be made effective within the historically developed official structures.

(63) The Catholic participants are convinced in view of recent biblical and historical insights as well as on the basis of the ecumenical experience of the working of the Holy Spirit in other churches, that the traditional rejection of the validity of the Lutheran ministerial office must be rethought. The recognition of the ecclesial character of other church communities, as expressed by Vatican II,<sup>36</sup> can be, theologically speaking, interpreted as a first step toward the recognition of the ministerial offices of these churches. Also worthy of note is the point that the ministerial office arose in Lutheran churches through a spiritual break-through in an emergency situation. Reconsideration of the doctrine of apostolic succession and reflection on ministries of charismatic origin as well as on presbyterial succession seem to permit a correction of the traditional point of view. Therefore, the Catholic members request the appropriate authorities in the Roman Catholic Church to consider whether the ecumenical urgency flowing from Christ's will for unity does not demand that the Roman Catholic Church examine seriously the question of recognition of the Lutheran ministerial office.

(61) The Second Vatican Council has emphasized in a new way that the basic task of priests is the proclamation of the gospel. Further, it is stressed in the administration of the sacraments that these are sacraments of the faith which are born from the word and nourished by the word.<sup>34</sup> According to the Lutheran Confessions, it is the task of the ministerial office to proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments in accordance with the gospel, so that in this way faith is awakened and strengthened.<sup>35</sup> Over against an earlier onesided emphasis on proclamation, the sacraments in the Lutheran churches are currently coming to have a more important place in the spiritual life of the congregations.

(64) The question of recognition of the ministry is viewed differently by Lutherans because they never denied the existence of the office of the ministry in the Roman Catholic Church. According to the Lutheran confessional position, the church exists wherever the gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are rightly administered.<sup>37</sup> Lutheran confessional writings leave no doubt that the one church has never ceased to exist, and they also emphasize the churchly character of the Roman Catholic communion. Also, changes in the understanding and practice of the Roman Catholic ministerial office, especially the stronger emphasis on the *ministerium verbi*, has largely removed the reasons for the reformers' criticism. The awareness of a common responsibility for the proclamation of the gospel in the world should impel the Lutheran churches also to examine seriously the question of the explicit recognition of the Roman Catholic ministerial office. Because of the already noted similarities in the understanding of the gospel, which has decisive effects on proclamation, administration of the sacraments and liturgical practice, the Lutherans feel that even now exchange

(62) On the basis of these findings it seems necessary to examine whether the still remaining differences on these and related questions must necessarily be viewed as church-dividing differences in faith, or whether they can be understood as the expression of different ways of thinking. While Lutherans emphasize more the "event" character of God's saving acts, Catholic tradition is more concerned about the metaphysical implications of statements about salvation. These two ways of thinking are not mutually exclusive insofar as they do not become self-contained and orientate themselves in terms of the critical norm of the gospel.

<sup>34</sup> See Vatican II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Augsburg Confession V; VII.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Decree on Ecumenism, 3f; 19.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Augsburg Confession, VII.

of pulpits and common eucharistic celebrations can on occasion be recommended.<sup>38</sup>

#### IV. The Gospel and the Unity of the Church

(65) The commission was unable to deal with the problem of the unity of the church in a comprehensive way. It limited itself to a few aspects which appeared important in the context of its theme.

##### A) *The question of papal primacy*

(66) In this connection the question of papal primacy emerges as a special problem for the relationship between Lutherans and Catholics. Catholics pointed to the beginning of this doctrine in the biblical witness concerning the special position of Peter and also to the differences in the understanding of primacy in the first and second millenia. By its doctrine of episcopal collegiality, the Second Vatican Council placed the primacy in a new interpretive framework and thereby avoided a widespread onesided and isolated way of understanding it. The primacy of jurisdiction must be understood as ministerial service to the community and as bond of the unity of the church. This service of unity is, above all, a service of unity in faith. The office of the papacy also includes the task of caring for legitimate diversity among local churches. The concrete shape of this office may vary greatly in accordance with changing historical conditions. It was recognized on the Lutheran side that no local church should exist in isolation since it is a manifestation of the universal church. In this sense the importance of a ministerial service of the communion of churches was acknowledged and at the same time reference was made to the problem raised for Lutherans by their lack of such an effective service of unity. The office of the papacy as a visible sign of the unity of the churches was therefore not excluded insofar as it is subordinated to the primacy of the gospel by theological reinterpretation and practical restructuring.<sup>39</sup>

(67) The question, however, which remains controversial between Catholics and Lutherans is whether the primacy of the pope is necessary for the church, or whether it represents only a fundamentally possible function. It was nevertheless agreed that the question of altar fellowship and of a mutual recognition of ministerial offices should not be un-

conditionally dependent on a consensus on the question of primacy.<sup>40</sup>

##### B) *Intercommunion*

(68) Fellowship in eucharistic celebration is an essential sign of church unity.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, striving for altar fellowship is central for all those who seek the unity of the church.

(69) In our day the problem of altar fellowship or intercommunion presents itself in a new way. Mutual recognition has progressed among the churches and they have become much more strongly aware of their common mission in the world. In some places members of our churches have met together at the Lord's table and are convinced that they have thereby rediscovered fellowship in the Lord. It is clear to us that at times unthinking and spiritually irresponsible actions are a hindrance to a final solution. On the other hand, the various experiments in common celebration of the Lord's Supper are also signs of the seriousness of the question and make urgent additional theological and canonical clarification. In this situation church leaders have a manifold responsibility. They must consider that the celebration of the Lord's Supper cannot be separated from confessing Christ and his eucharistic presence nor from the fellowship of the church; but they must also take care lest they hinder the work of the Spirit. They should by their helpful instructions lead the community of believers in hope for the reunion of all separated Christians.

(70) It is apparent to us that the questions raised here and the attempts at solution which have been offered call for still more thorough investigation. Nevertheless, at least some directions which lead to answers to these questions can be indicated. There was agreement that our common baptism is an important starting point in this matter of eucharistic fellowship.<sup>42</sup> To be sure, this is not the only prerequisite for complete altar fellowship, but it should force us to examine the question of whether the former exclusion of certain communities of baptized Christians can be rightfully continued today.

(71) Although there are considerable differences of opinion on this matter in the Catholic Church it is pointed out on the Catholic side that there is no exclusive identity between the one church of Christ and the Ro-

<sup>38</sup> Cf. nos. 68-74 of this report.

<sup>39</sup> See the signatures to the Smalcald Articles, Melancthon's intervention.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, 3.

<sup>41</sup> See 1 Cor. 10:17.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism 3.



man Catholic Church.<sup>43</sup> This one church of Christ is actualized in an analogous manner also in other churches. That also means that the unity of the Roman Catholic Church is not perfect but that it strives toward the perfect unity of the church. In this sense the eucharistic celebration in the Catholic church also suffers from imperfection. It will become the perfect sign of the unity of the church only when all those who through baptism have been invited in principle to the table of the Lord and are able in reality to partake.

(72) The Lutherans emphasized that the communion practices of the separated churches must receive their orientation from that which is demanded of the church by the ministry of reconciliation among men. For the Lord's Supper is given to men by the crucified and risen Lord so that they might be received into his fellowship and saved through it. A celebration of the Lord's Supper in which baptized believers may not participate suffers from an inner contradiction and from the start, therefore, does not fulfil the purpose for which the Lord established it. For the Lord's Supper is the reconciling acceptance of men through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

(73) Practical consequences emerge from these considerations for Lutherans and for Roman Catholics. All steps taken by the churches must be shaped by serious efforts to further the unity of the churches. Because of the anomalies of present church divisions, this unity will not be suddenly established. A process of gradual rapprochement is necessary in which various stages are possible. At present it should already be recommended that the church authorities, on the basis of what is already shared in faith and sacrament and as sign and anticipation of the promised and hoped for unity, make possible occasional acts of intercommunion as, for example, during ecumenical events or in the pastoral care of those involved in mixed marriages. Uncertainty concerning a common doctrine of the ministerial office still makes for difficulties in reciprocal intercommunion agreements. However, the realization of eucharistic fellowship should not depend exclusively on full recognition of the offices of the ministry.

(74) In this connection it should be considered that the pastoral responsibility of the church leadership can obligate it to proceed in such a way on this question of intercom-

munion as not to confuse the faithful. But pastoral responsibility also demands taking into account the situation of those faithful who suffer in special ways under the necessities of separation or who because of their convictions think that they must seek fellowship in Christ in joint celebrations of the Lord's Supper. Both sides point out that a solution to the question of intercommunion between Catholics and Lutherans must not neglect concern for fellowship with other churches.

(75) At the conclusion of their work the members of the commission look back in joyful gratitude on the experience of this truly brotherly encounter. Even the discussion of opposing convictions and opinions led us to sense even more deeply our profound community and joint responsibility for our common Christian heritage. Of course, the participants also became aware of the difficulties on the road towards complete church unity. This road will be discovered only if both churches pursue in all humility and honesty the question of the truth of the one gospel of Jesus Christ. The encounter with the Lord who encourages us ever anew by his gospel is more than a rational process. Joint theological efforts, therefore, will have to become part of a spiritual life process. This process of spiritual encounter should, so far as possible, become an increasingly united one. For the Lord strengthens us with his word in the spirit and makes it effective wherever "two or three" are "gathered in his name"<sup>44</sup> and "agree about anything they ask".<sup>45</sup>

*The report is signed by the following members of the Study Commission:*

Catholic participants:

Professor J. A. Fitzmyer, USA

Professor W. Kasper, Germany (Chairman—Catholics)

Bishop H. L. Martensen, Denmark (Special Statement)

Prof. E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., Holland

Professor H. Schürmann, Germany (Special Statement)

Professor A. Vögtle, Germany (Special Statement)

Professor J. L. Witte, S.J., Rome (Special Statement)

<sup>43</sup> See Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Matt. 18:20.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Matt. 18:19.

Lutheran participants:

Professor D. H. Conzelmann, Germany (Special Statement)

Professor G. Lindbeck, USA

Professor W. Lohff, Germany

Professor E. Molland, Norway (Chairman-Lutherans)

Professor P.-E. Persson, Sweden

Professor K. Stendahl, USA

Professor G. Strecker, Germany.

*Special Statement by Bishop H. L. Martenson and subscribed to by Professor A. Vögtle:*

According to the Catholic understanding of the faith, eucharist and ministry can simply not be separated. Even in exceptional cases it is not possible to celebrate the eucharist without the office of the ministry. Similarly there can be no eucharist without it being community-related.

Although the realization of eucharistic fellowship, as it is called in no. 73, can *not exclusively* be made dependent of the recognition of the ministerial office, such a recognition is essential and necessary for a eucharistic celebration and should never be lacking if it is to be recognized by the Catholic church.

Catholic authorities, therefore, would be well advised, independent of the question of recognition of the office of the ministry, not to permit Catholics to receive the Lord's Supper on special occasions at non-Catholic worship services.

*Special Statement by Professor H. Schürmann*

I did not attend the third session of the study commission, May 4-8 in Nemi, concerning the "Structures of the Church" (cf. no. 5), nor the fifth session, February 21-26, 1971 in San Anton, Malta and the consultations at that meeting as well as the voting on the final report (cf. no. 6). Therefore I wish to explain my understanding of the "request" in no. 63 and the "recommendation" in no. 73 so as to give specific meaning to my signature.

In view of the realities of the Lutheran churches today or of the Lutheran World Federation, it hardly seems possible to speak of a uniform understanding and assessment of "the Lutheran ministry" (cf. final sentence no. 11). Therefore the "request . . . (to) ex-

amine seriously the question of recognition of the Lutheran ministerial office" (no. 68) seems to include the desire to achieve a more binding common understanding within the Lutheran churches on the doctrine of the ministry as for instance is expressed in this report.

In view of the "unclearly concerning a common doctrine of the ministerial office" in no. 73 and the emphasis on "the pastoral responsibility of the church leadership" in no. 74, I can only conceive of the "recommendation" in no. 73 addressed to the church authorities in the sense of limited admission to the respective eucharistic celebrations in the cases specified.

*Special Statement by Professor J. L. Witte, S.J.*

I agree with the report of the Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission on "The Gospel and the Church". However, I have the following reservations concerning no. 73, concerns already expressed by me at the final session at Malta.

In view of the "unclearly concerning a common doctrine of the ministerial office", the recommendation that "church authorities . . . make possible occasional acts of intercommunion" (in the sense of "reciprocal admission"), seems to me to be, theologically and pastorally, a premature recommendation from the Catholic point of view (citations are from no. 73). From the Catholic perspective I am convinced that in the present situation the commission should not have done more than recommend that church authorities, on the basis of what is already shared in faith and sacrament and as sign and anticipation of the promised and hoped for unity, make possible occasional acts of limited admission to the respective eucharistic celebrations, as for example at ecumenical occasions and in the case of mixed marriages.

*Special Statement by Professor D. H. Conzelmann*

When after thorough reflection I sign my name to the report of the Commission, I do so because I consider its work to be good, useful and worthy of continuation. My signature does not imply that I identify myself with the theological views which appear in the "Lutheran parts" of the report.

1. At several points a unified Lutheran position is lacking, as for example on the nature and importance of church law, of the apos-



tolic office and, beyond that, of the ministry in general, or ordination, etc.

2. Contemporary movements both among church people and also particularly among the younger generation of theologians should in my view receive more consideration, as for example, the demand for making infant baptism optional or even abolishing it.

3. For theological reasons I am forced to take direct issue with several statements, as for example the historical relativization of the question of truth (no. 24; no. 27; no. 63) and the statements in the second sentence of no. 29.

## VILMOS VAJTA

### The Promise of the Present for the Future of the Oikumene—An Assessment of the Lutheran-Catholic Dialog

Dr. Vilmos Vajta is a Research Professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. Previously he was Director of the former LWF Department of Theology and also an Associate Editor of this journal.

#### I. Present and Future

The present time is pregnant with the future. Today carries within it the seed of tomorrow. What is happening now, therefore, already determines the future. For the present embraces many possibilities and on the decisions made today depends what can grow tomorrow. Thus today's events also preempt the future. In thinking about the present, therefore, we must take this inescapable connection into account and try to insure that decision-making is taken very seriously. For there are promises in the present which are God's call to men so to shape events that his gift of salvation to mankind unfolds within history.

To try to assess the position reached in the Catholic-Lutheran dialog today only makes sense if this assessment seeks to prepare our future and encourages us to protect and nurture the seeds in which the promise is contained. In this report, therefore, it is essential to elaborate the promising elements in the dialog today which carry the hope of the future within them. This will inevitably mean criticizing and if need be rejecting any retrospective approach which is unwilling to risk considering the events of the present

I consider it my duty to inform the commission of these reservations. For in the debates which will follow the publication of this report I can and shall stand solidly behind the work of the commission, but for purposes of theological argumentation, I must retain my freedom in relation to the Lutheran theses as well as in reference to the criticism of the Catholic positions. It would be very helpful for these discussions if also the documentation on which the report is based were made available to the public.

*Translated from the German by Dr. Gustav Kopka, Grand Forks, North Dakota; revised by Professor George A. Lindbeck, New Haven, Connecticut.*

from the standpoint of their drive towards the future.

As in the affairs of mankind, so in the affairs of the church there is a tide, a definite *kairos* which must be seized. For such moments quickly pass, and the offer held out by the Lord of history and, with it, the opportunity of the future are let slip. Life goes on, of course, but we do not walk with the Lord who is himself our way. The people of God live constantly in readiness for new departures. The only abiding thing is abiding with him because he himself travels with us. Amid all the changes of history this remains our hope.

Our century has been profoundly marked by the ecumenical movement in the life of the churches. There have been several phases in this movement.<sup>1</sup> Following the dynamic period when pioneering churchmen took the initiative, the movement was given the official blessing of the churches. The Amsterdam Assembly of 1948 was a turning point here, just as the Second Vatican Council was

<sup>1</sup> See the analyses by P. Lønning and G. Casalis in *Die Zukunft des Ökumenismus* (Frankfurt: Otto Lembeck), 1972.

a corresponding turning point in the life of the Roman Catholic Church. Although the Roman Catholic Church did not join the World Council of Churches, it did open the door to ecumenism. The Christian world breathed again and began to hope for a future unity from which Rome was no longer excluded. The Council thus prepared the way for the initiation of bilateral conversations between the divided churches and now a few years later we are beginning to assess the results and to ask about future prospects.

It must be admitted that the transition from the more informal ecumenical movement to official church ecumenism raised a number of problems. The hope that the adoption of ecumenism by church authorities would hasten the achievement of concrete unity among the churches has only been partly fulfilled. The transition was at the same time felt by some to be a hindrance. In recent years in the discussions between Rome and Protestant Christendom in the western world, these problems have presented themselves with even greater clarity.

For a time, ecumenism became the fashion. It became an indispensable part of Christian relationships and a kind of "ecumenicality" developed (to adopt the term coined by an American journal). Is there any bishop or church-president today who would dare to disapprove of ecumenism? Not to appear publicly as a champion of ecumenism would make him seem a very odd nonconformist. But when everyone declares himself "ecumenical", while no one's subjective sincerity need be called in question, there is a shift in the meaning of the term from its theological definition to the subjective level or to the level of obedience to instructions handed down from higher authority. The dynamic of the ecumenical movement is thus turned into official church routine. Thus at the very moment when the movement is adopted it is in danger of losing its essential vigor.

The vital question for ecumenism is whether it can preserve its quality as a movement or whether it is to be turned into an official church "ideology" and thereby made to conform to prevailing confessional interests. One of the great moments in the Second Vatican Council was, of course, the rejection of this temptation by referring to the catholic principles of the one and only ecumenism rather than catholic ecumenism.<sup>2</sup> But the tension

has not disappeared and we need to keep this problem in mind particularly in this period of official bilateral conversations. Only as the ecumenical movement proves capable of defending its independent way, independently that is of confessional interests (and therefore of church political interests too) will it maintain its spiritual dynamism.

## II. The Ecumenical Hope amid the Changes of History

We have reached a turning point in the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church. The situation into which we have moved today discloses a new prospect which was still hidden from us only a few years ago. Theological discussion in recent decades has, of course, put a new complexion on various problems of the past and it is now clear that there has been a shift of positions compared with the time of the Reformation. But only after the Second Vatican Council had opened the way to ecumenism, did official church authorities begin to work out the implications of this for the life of the churches. It was in this way that a Roman Catholic-Lutheran working group was officially appointed by the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation and sponsored the establishment of a study commission on "The Gospel and the Church". After four years work, the findings of this commission, appointed by the highest church authorities, are now before us and have been transmitted to the bodies concerned.<sup>3</sup> Its report is the seed of a theological drawing together which is full of hope for the future. What will become of it, what could become of it, depends upon what the respective church authorities on both sides decide. This decision will be a fatal one, therefore.

My concern in this paper is to point out the decisions which have already been taken in the work of the study commission and the consequences which follow from them if the ecumenical hope of a restoration of unity is to be achieved in the changing historical process. What I shall propose, therefore, is

<sup>2</sup> On the history of the title of chapter 1 of the Decree on Ecumenism see Lorenz Cardinal Jaeger, *A Stand on Ecumenism—The Council's Decree* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1965), p. 29f.

<sup>3</sup> The complete official text of the report (cited henceforth as the Malta Report) appears in this issue of *Lutheran World*, pp. 259-273. Attention is drawn to the fact that the versions published in the *Herder Korrespondenz*, *Evangelische Kommentare* and *Materialdienst* of the Bensheim Institute for Ecumenical Studies (which appeared in November 1971) did not include the introduction and the *Special Statements*. Otherwise the partial texts given there correspond with the official one. In the rest of this article references to the Malta Report refer simply to the paragraph numbers.



to be understood in the light of the position we have reached in the conversation between our two traditions. At the same time, however, it is essential to point out the demands which in my view are inescapable if we want to leave behind us once and for all a period of hopeless division, a period of controversy and self-justification. What this assessment tries to do, therefore, is to point out how the theological decisions implicit in the commission's work relate to the life of the churches today and carry new hope for the future.

# 1. Frontiers Crossed and new Territory Entered

## a) *Confessional frontiers are theologically irrelevant*

The introduction to the Malta Report draws attention to something which has often been noticed before in ecumenical meetings but which is now concretely illustrated in the Catholic-Lutheran relationship: "By and large, the members of the study commission are convinced that within the framework of their theme they have achieved a noteworthy and far-reaching consensus. This consensus extends, not only to the theological understanding of the gospel, of its basic and normative importance for the church and of its christological and soteriological center, but also to closely related and highly important points of doctrine which until now have been controversial. Undoubtedly some questions require further clarification. Yet we ask ourselves whether the still remaining differences must be viewed as hindrances to church fellowship. Are not the differences, cutting across church lines, arising from diverse response to contemporary challenges, at least as great as the traditional differences between the Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church? These questions concern all of us together, even if we approach them from different starting points, and they can be answered only through a common effort." (no. 8)

I should like to interpret these statements as an acknowledgment that the confessional boundaries between the two churches are theologically irrelevant. In the Report itself the consensus referred to is worked out in detail in the understanding of the gospel; in other words, it is experienced precisely in a question which led to separation at the time of the Reformation. In view of the Lutheran conviction that a *consentire de doctrina evangelii* is decisively important for the unity of the church, and even the sufficient and only

essential condition for that unity, then this finding must have considerable consequences for the question of church fellowship.

It is often forgotten, of course, that a *consentire*—even for Lutherans—is inseparably connected with the church's sacramental ministry. Doctrinal consensus in itself is not enough for unity, for the Lutheran Church any more than for the Roman Catholic Church. Certainly the problem is a much more difficult one from the Catholic standpoint. But for the Lutherans too, the consequence of agreement in understanding the gospel is a common sacramental ministry. It will become clear in what follows whether insuperable problems arise here for the Roman Catholic Church.

Assuming this agreed understanding of the gospel, one conclusion follows at once: the limits of the two churches can no longer be assumed to coincide with the confessional limits.<sup>4</sup> The gospel does not respect these limits. Thus man's question about salvation is answered only by conversion to the gospel itself and not by conversion to one church or the other. The logical consequence of this is the demand that the churches should renounce all attempts to gain converts from other churches. On the face of it, this is a negative consequence, yet it could create an atmosphere of brotherly commerce of great importance for the common life of the two churches. It would broaden the scope of unconstrained cooperation and thereby register a first step towards ecclesial reunion. This moving on to new ground is a natural development since the confessional boundaries have been superceded.

## b) *The challenge of the world*

What has made this new understanding of the gospel possible? The answer to this is to be found in the new context which has opened up for understanding the gospel. The world of today is a completely different world from that in which the gospel was first proclaimed. Our generation has been tempted more than any previous one to dissociate the church's message of salvation so sharply from the changes in the world that this message has hardly anything left to say to mankind today. Where we succumb to this temptation the inevitable result is either the complete rejection of the gospel (as for example in contemporary atheism) or the retreat of the church from the world in which it lives today

<sup>4</sup> Cf. H. M. Barth, "Die Relativierung der Konfessionsgrenzen durch die moderne Theologie", in *Materialdienst*, Vol. 21, no. 6, 1970.

(on the ground of the enmity between church and world).

In its deliberations, therefore, the study commission rightly took up the significance of this interpretative dimension of the world for the proclamation of the gospel. It devoted a whole session to this problem in Båstad in 1968.<sup>5</sup> It might almost be said that the upshot of these discussions was to introduce into these bilateral discussions a "third partner", namely the modern world and modern man. At any rate they undoubtedly adhered to this dimension of understanding represented by the world, and to its inescapability for all proclamation of the gospel. I quote: "It is in the world and for the sake of the world that Christ lived, died and rose again. Likewise, it is in the world and for the sake of the world that the church witnesses to these saving acts of God. The world is both the locus and the goal of the proclamation of the gospel. These realities are so intimately inter-related that what the world is and how we understand it, inevitably influences the formulation of the gospel and the life and structures of the church." (no. 55)

To recognize this new dimension of understanding certainly makes it possible to avoid the alternative just mentioned (atheism or retreat from the world), but the introduction of the "third partner" poses additional problems which suddenly confront the two previous partners as a common task once they enter this new territory of the "gospel in the context of the world". It is true that the world diverts our attention from traditional controversial issues; but it presents itself as a factor which makes new demands on the proclamation of the gospel, certainly on the kind of proclamation which has become second nature in both church traditions. The realization that "the world not only provides opportunities for the communication of the gospel, but it also has a hermeneutical function" (no. 43) is a far-reaching admission that without the world, the church cannot faithfully fulfil its task of proclamation. This represents a second crossing of the frontiers: this time the frontier between church and world. Entry upon this new territory will present both theology and the church with extensive new tasks in which it will at the same time become clear that what is essential and binding in the gospel is a common

bond among the Christian traditions rather than something divisive. It is here, therefore, in this new encounter between church and world, that a solution must be found to the problem which besets us all alike today, namely the problem of the essence of the Christian faith. Not, of course, that an analysis of the world will reveal to us the gospel. But in the encounter with the world the gospel assumes concrete form, its claim in the present historical situation. Thus this encounter enables the Christian churches to formulate their faith simply and relevantly. Karl Rahner's words may well be quoted here: "The simple which contains the whole is always the most difficult, not the cheap thing which is sneaked in by a terrible simplification but that which is paid for by the supreme effort of thought."<sup>6</sup> The most important aspect of this new context for understanding the gospel is that it is not really "new" at all. On the contrary, it refers the church once again to its original commission—and thereby brings it nearer to the unity of divided Christians. The church of the future will have to reformulate its confession of faith. Through the challenge of the world God is saying to the church that it cannot do this without the world to which it is nevertheless sent.

### c) *Secular ecumenism: gospel as living*

In wide circles of Christendom, this invasion of the church by the world is seen as a mortal danger to the church's future. Others, on the contrary, see it as the possibility of a future for the church, an opportunity for it to play the role God has assigned the church in the historical change to which the world is subject. The Malta Report is certainly not filled with foreboding; rather does it look forward with ecumenical hope to the occupation of this new territory. But with Christian realism it also sees that "God's redemptive act in Christ takes place on and through the cross. There is here no room for the triumphalism and theocratic tendencies to which Christians have so often fallen victim. The church must ever remember that Christ's victory in and over the world continues to be a hidden one and that it must witness to Christ's work of reconciliation in such a way as to share in his sufferings by struggling against the powers of evil in this age which is passing away." (no. 40) This proviso, based on the theology of the cross, is to be welcomed. It does not, however, pre-

<sup>5</sup> Only one of the important papers read at this session (by J. B. Metz, W. Kasper, P. E. Persson and P. Hefner), that of P. Hefner on "Communicating the Gospel to the World", has so far been published in *Lutheran World*, Vol. XVI, 1969, No. 4, p. 322 f.

<sup>6</sup> K. Rahner, "Zukunft der Kirche—zwischen Planen und Hoffen" (Future of the church—between planning and hoping) in *Kirche zwischen Planen und* (Kassel, 1968), p. 40.



vent clear and emphatic expression of the truth that the gospel is to be embodied in a total life commitment in the world. For the church "must witness to God's saving acts not only through word and sacrament, not only through the verbal proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, but also by following Christ in bearing the weaknesses of the weak and identifying with the needy and oppressed. For the gospel is more than a message. It reveals the power of the eschaton already at work in our world under the form of the cross." (no. 40) "The gospel applies to all domains of being and to all aspects of human life. Christ's victory through his death and resurrection encourages believers to live by his promise and to perform works of love. We are thereby warned against all dualistic patterns of piety and thought. The gospel cannot be confined to a purely spiritual, private or inward sphere which has no consequence for bodily or public life. Contrary to a certain Catholic tradition, 'nature' cannot be conceived as the self-sufficient presupposition for supernatural grace. At the same time we must reject the notion, corresponding to a widespread Lutheran way of thinking, of a 'worldly kingdom' which has no relationship to the gospel." (no. 41)

All this is designed to emphasize that the gospel is not simply the words and teaching of Jesus Christ but includes also his work for the salvation of mankind and therefore for the healing (salvation) of the bodily life of man. But the church needs to realize clearly in the widespread process of secularization today that it does not carry out its worldly task by opposing this process. God's cause is not lost simply because the church cannot hang out its own sign on all human achievements which benefit mankind. Our readiness today to speak of "secular ecumenism"<sup>7</sup> is not promoted by any readiness to allow the church to vanish into the world. Our concern, rather, is that the church should become aware of what its service in the gospel implies for the world. Thus the criticism directed against the church today—because of a mistaken involvement in the world—is not automatically to be interpreted into a criticism of the gospel. In the historical change through which the world is now

passing, the gospel is the hope of the world, the *oikumene*, perhaps precisely when it is not identified but influences the life of the world as hidden leaven.

#### d) *The crisis of identity in the church*

Once the barriers have been crossed and a new territory entered, the church faces a crisis, one of the most profound in its history since this crisis concerns its own identity. When the boundaries between confessions which have for centuries been divided become uncertain, when it is no longer possible to draw the dividing line between church and world to which we had blithely become accustomed, when the church's service actually constrains it to lose itself in an anonymous activity in the world, how can all this fail to affect the very foundations of our identity as church? We must not remain silent about this problem. Nor should we be content with superficial solutions to it. It is our future task to find amid the historical changes in our world the appropriate place for the church, one in which it can recognize itself without hankering to return to outdated patterns of a vanished society. In future, therefore, the church will have to be less preoccupied with its "nature" and with "being itself". On the contrary, it will have to discover its "presence in" the world, its "being-for-the world". In the new dimension of understanding the gospel it will have to understand itself as justifying its existence only by its presence. Its presence among mankind will discover its face far better than all its past. The question about the church must be "restructured" today in this direction.

#### 2. Redistribution of Power and Reconstruction of the Church

I should like now to consider on a wider canvas than it was given in the Malta Report the ecclesiological problem which we encountered in thinking about the new dimension for understanding the gospel. In other words, let me try to survey the historical change in the *ekklesia* of Jesus in order to bring out the hope this implies for the new community of the future. This survey involves reflection on the authority of the church, an authority which is part of its divine mission, and on the human beings who, as God's people are affected by this mission. Historical change is evident in the phenomenon of the redistribution of power in the church and from this it is possible to glimpse a future reconstruction of the community as representing the ecumenical hope.

<sup>7</sup> A document on the problem of secular ecumenism was published by the Institute for Ecumenical Research of Strasbourg. See, *inter alia*, "Welche Einheit sollen wir suchen?", in *Lutherische Monatshefte*, No. 4, 1970, p. 185f. Cf. Michael Rogness, "The Phenomenon of 'Secular Ecumenism'—North America", in *Lutheran World*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, 1968, p. 334f.

a) *The awakening of the church at its base*

The study commission on "The Gospel and the Church", after recognizing the historical character of the gospel which proclaims God's presence in Christ to constantly changing situations, turned then naturally enough to consider the criteria of the unity of the gospel in the changes of history. Here a distinction was made between the primary criterion, demonstrating that the Christ event is the saving event, and secondary criteria. Lutherans include among these latter secondary criteria: "the living word of preaching is the normal form of authoritative interpretation of the gospel". But they also allow that "in special situations (cf. the *kirchenkampf*) the church as the people of God may be led to confess the gospel afresh and with authority in reference to new questions". (no. 19) The Catholics refer here to the *sensus fidelium* which plays a certain role in the formation and in the definition of dogmas. "Since the gospel is constantly interpreted in faith and life, the living faith-experiences of Christians constitute a secondary criterion." (no. 20)

The Report itself does not go into the question of the way secondary criteria actually apply in practice, nor was the problem examined more closely even in the discussions of the commission. It is surely important, however, to glance at these phenomena in order to understand what is happening in the church today.

After a long period in which the church's public role was entrusted exclusively to its leading figures (ministry, bishops, pope, synods, councils, etc.), today the voice of the people of God is once again being heard. The church at its base is awake and is questioning the long unchallenged exercise of power by the leading officials of the church. What is happening today is a redistribution of power, or at least a confrontation which can lead to such a redistribution of power. Certainly the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church was not changed in the Council but the old positions received a good shaking up as a result of the harnessing of the concept of the "people of God". The "laity" are not so easily satisfied today with being "taught" as they were not so very long ago. A similar process is at work in Lutheran Christendom. For though the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers always provided in principle for "rank and file" participation in the government of the church, the Reformation scarcely provided the necessary structures in which such participation

could have functioned properly. So even here Christians remained prisoners in a "pastors' church".

The growth of the movements and so-called "informal groups" in the present period has given this phenomenon a new form. Criticism of such groups has led to a too casual underestimation of their importance and there has been too little reflection on the ecclesiological question raised by these groups. Whether we think of the large movements which are conservative in tendency ("The Silent Ones" in France or "No Other Gospel" in Germany) or of the less organized groups which often have a political character, they all present church authorities today with a question. They cannot be left out of account, if for no other reason than the public notice these ecclesiological "outsiders" command which is often greater than the attention paid to the voice of the "establishment".<sup>8</sup>

What we must appreciate in this phenomenon is the appearance of a basic ecclesiological factor, namely, the people of God, whose voice ought not to go unheeded once again just because it may be singing out of tune. For it is surely undeniable that new spiritual life is also springing forth in these new forms of expression, which will certainly be of benefit to the future of our churches.

b) *The ministerial office within the people of God*

The Vatican Council based its ecclesiological reflections on the concept of the people of God. This made it possible for the commission to formulate the following statement as its agreed starting point for reflections on the ministerial office: "The witness of the gospel requires that there be witnesses to the gospel. The church as a whole bears witness to Christ; the church as a whole is the priestly people of God". (no. 48) This is to affirm that authority in the church is to be understood as based upon the mission of the whole people of God. This, far from excluding, actually requires the creation within the total structure of the people of God of "ministries, structures and orders which should serve the realization of the saving act of God in Christ". (no. 49)

<sup>8</sup> The problem was discussed in depth at a colloquy in Strasbourg. The papers, etc. were published in a volume entitled *Les Groupes Informels dans l'Eglise* (Strasbourg: CERDIC, 1971). The journal *Esprit* also devoted a special issue to the problem in November 1971 entitled *Reinventer l'Eglise*.



Despite the common recognition here of an important problem, both partners are able to affirm: "the office of the ministry stands over against the community as well as within the community". What the words "over against" imply is then explained more precisely: "the ministerial office represents Christ and his over-againstness to the community only insofar as it gives expression to the gospel". (no. 50). The words "insofar as" are important here because they indicate that both people of God and ministerial office are subject to the criterion of the gospel. The insistence on the "over-againstness"—and both Lutherans and Catholics do insist on it—does not mean an unqualified distinction marking off the ministerial office holder from the community. The ministry receives God's word within the totality of God's people. The tradition, therefore, is not simply the continuity of the doctrine taught by them, but solely the gospel of God which has been declared within the people of God.

The authority of the ministerial office, therefore, is this mission, which then in virtue of an authorization within the community, selects certain men. But God gives his mandate through men who constitute the people of God. Within the church this mission can indeed be limited to certain men but they are only clothed with the authority of the gospel when they are upheld by the people of God.

This enables us to understand why, in spite of all its problems, the renewal of the church at its base, is nevertheless necessary for a healthy attention to the basic structure of the church. The whole problem of a church (identified with the pastors) only arose in fact because of the suppression of the rank and file. This results in the suppression of the charismatic variety which in the spiritual dialog was meant to contribute to the well-being of all who belong to the body of Christ. But the suppression of the basis makes any ministry impossible. Renewal of the ministerial office is inseparably bound up with the awakening of the church at its base.

c) *Changing society and the structure of the church*

When these problems actually arise, there are always fears of a "democratization of the church". As if the "hierarchization of the church" was not at least as serious a danger, as can be demonstrated from the history of the church. But the adherence to ministerial structure within the people of God nevertheless gives rise to certain problems, which the Catholic-Lutheran conversation has also

taken into consideration. In other words, when there is a vital relationship between ministry and people, we have to take into account too the part played by the human society within which the church lives.

Historical research has shown that from the New Testament period right down through the centuries there has been a continuing reciprocal interplay between the ministerial office and the social conditions prevailing at any given time. If the world already exercises an interpretative influence in the formation of the gospel, it exercises an even greater and more fateful influence, though one which is often forgotten, as a human society with regard to structures. When church institutions are subjected to critical challenge as they are today, this is not simply because they are thought to hinder the gospel and its service to society, but rather because they seem no longer to provide appropriate forms for the communication of the gospel. Or, worse still, because they are regarded as guarantees—even having divine right behind them!—of social structures which as a result of historical change have turned out to be positively damaging to mankind.<sup>9</sup>

An understanding of the historical character of church structures is therefore indispensable if the church is to fulfil its mission in new forms in a changed society. Can the church manage this?

Here at any rate the Malta Report pushes forward: "Although the ministerial office belongs constitutively to the church and has a continuing basic structure, still it is possible for concrete forms of office, which were necessary and important at a specific time for the proper carrying out of the church's mission, to be of no or little value in other situations. This enables us today also to undertake restructuring in order to adapt to new situations. In so doing, old structures, as for example the office of deacon, can be renewed and new structures can emerge. Especially is there great need today to consider the prophetic function of the church towards the world and the structural consequences of this for the church. The exercise of the prophetic function demands an area of freedom and of public opinion within the church". (no. 56)

In the light of these considerations, new approaches could be formulated of the understanding of apostolic succession and of a reinterpretation of the traditional doctrine

<sup>9</sup> See Casalis, *Zukunft des Ökumenismus*, op. cit., fn. 1, p. 52 f.



of ministry. Within this perspective of the gospel as sent into the world as God's authority in the midst of his people and at the same time accepting the charismatic commissioning of a ministry of reconciliation, the commission proposed "serious consideration" of the possibility of a mutual recognition of church ministries. Despite the fact that it is here that the Catholics recognize one of the most stubborn problems, the discussions of the commission have made it clear to them that this question has been set in a new light today and is no longer the completely hopeless one in face of which resignation is the only rational attitude.

The Lutherans indeed went even further. They asserted that "the stronger emphasis on the *ministerium verbi*, has largely removed the reasons for the reformers' criticism". (no. 64) From these premises they also reach conclusions about pulpit and altar fellowship with the Roman Catholic Church.

The churches must become aware of this new dialog situation and draw from it the necessary conclusions, however difficult it may be to work these out.

#### d) *The universal mission and its structure*

That the church of Jesus Christ has a universal mission is as clear to Lutherans as it is to Catholics. Although scattered in various parts of the world (= *oikumene*), the church coheres in unity as the one people of God. In a discussion concerned with the unity of the church, one inescapable question is about the pattern developed by the Catholic Church to give structural expression to this universal mission, namely, the papacy. Today in fact, after the bitter controversies of Reformation times, the realization that the structures of the church are historical in character and consequently subject to change has led in the present conversation to a new possibility of dialog. To historical research in particular it is clear that in the history of the church the papacy and with it the primacy have been subject to different interpretations. In our time the Second Vatican Council has made a decisive contribution to a new understanding. It did so, in the first place, by the doctrine of collegiality which provided a new dimension for the interpretation of the primacy and, in the second place, by interpreting the primacy of jurisdiction as a service of unity in faith.

No comparable pattern is available for the Lutherans. In Lutheranism unity movements have always been purely voluntary and fre-

quently pragmatic in character. Here unity in the faith has found visible expression in the historic confessions of faith. It was frankly admitted in the Malta Report that at a time when efforts were being made to achieve the unity of mankind in concrete forms in the world, the Lutherans lacked an effective ministry of unity. Understood as a "theological reinterpretation and practical restructuring", subordinating the primacy to the gospel, the "office of the papacy as a visible sign of the unity of the churches was therefore not excluded". (no. 66) The only question left unsettled is whether the primacy represents an essential function or merely one which is in principle possible. In favor of the latter interpretation is the agreement that the primacy cannot be made a prior condition of altar fellowship. (no. 67)

These approaches to agreement only became possible because the Catholic theologians themselves put forward an extremely critical view of the actual form taken by the papacy in history. Only the Second Vatican Council seemed to afford them any ground for optimism, particularly the doctrine of collegiality developed by the Council. But even in this respect we must follow its example and look at the historical evidence, and ask whether the collegiality actually practiced in Rome in recent years matches the hopes which were vested in this principle.

The important point here is the application of this principle to the local churches and their special situation. In respect of this question, the experiences of recent years are not encouraging. The Report declares: "The office of the papacy also includes the task of caring for legitimate diversity among local churches." (no. 66) But the collegiality seems on the contrary to have been used in fact to hinder the legitimate peculiarities of the local church and with this the possibilities of a different practice than that which may be appropriate in other parts of the world. Rome does not seem yet to have integrated variety into its notion of universality. Therefore the churches in the most diverse parts of the world are compelled to give "collegial" support to Rome's ideal of unity, instead of making unity collegially possible by respecting the variety springing up from a diversity of situations.<sup>10</sup> A radical change must take place in the use to which the Roman primacy is put—in the direction pointed out by no.

<sup>10</sup> Various measures taken by the Congregation de fide, the papal nominations of bishops, and statements by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity on intercommunion provide some examples.



66 of the Malta Report approved by the Catholics themselves—if further discussion on this question is to become palatable again to the Lutheran partners.

It is precisely here that the Roman Catholic Church is faced with a fundamental decision not merely for its own future but for the future of Christendom as a whole. It must be admitted that it is a strange irony of history that the ministry which is intended to be a visible sign of the universal unity of the church should be regarded as a radical obstacle to this unity. But here, too, a redistribution of power has taken place in our time whether it is recognized or not.

#### e) *The ecumenical fellowship of the "small groups"*

As a contrast to the ideal of the "larger church" which we have just looked at, I should like now to turn back to the rudimentary part of the universal church, namely to the "church at its base", to the "rank and file" church. Universality is not in fact decided in the global dimensions. It is not at the level of the "larger church" that the decisively new is happening today in the *oikumene*, not even in the ecumenical assemblies. The decision about the future will in fact be made instead according as those who guide the church today realize that while certainly needing to cultivate and watch over the structure they have inherited, they must do this only in order to save the hidden life which is present within this structure. This life, which has to be saved for a rebuilding of the community of Jesus in the future, is awakening in the small anonymous and hidden groups within the community assembled in the name of Jesus.

These tiny communities today contain—as perhaps they always have done—the seed of the future. In them a spiritual life is taking shape, beyond the confessional boundaries, in which people as disciples of Jesus rediscover themselves as confessors even outside the normal structures of the local church. The future alone will show whether this new *oikumene*, which takes the revolutionary change in society seriously enough to abandon the still tacit claim to exercise political influence, i.e., the old dream of the *corpus christianum*, will be permitted to develop. Only such an attitude would clear the way for anonymous Christian service in the world and treat people seriously as "mature" persons. Free service of this kind would keep the disciples of Jesus close to the creative task of following Christ in the world of today

as their original and proper business. As "church" they would in this way become just as homeless as were the first Christians in their day. But out of the living stones they would build the new temple in the midst of this world.

To understand this vision of the Christendom of the future, to describe its concrete form as the Church of Jesus Christ in the historical changes of the world, there is one other set of problems we must look at more closely.

### 3. Anticipation and Walking by Faith

In describing the theological principles and the essential decisions we have already made it clear that Christendom's present situation is one which requires decisions pregnant for the future. All that remains to be done in what follows therefore is to consider this future in more detail, taking as our starting point the concrete conditions of the church today.

#### a) *Faith and love in the fraternal fellowship—signs of the future*

When we were considering ecclesiology we came upon the small groups in which the spiritual life springs up, and in which it can grow and be supported by fraternal fellowship. If it is this element of human fellowship which is the missing factor in the large churches today, it is precisely in the small groups that the life in Christ can develop more effectively. That we are not thinking here of extremist groups of a revolutionary movement, pursuing only their political objectives, needs only to be mentioned in passing as self-evident. On the other hand, it cannot be gainsaid that it is precisely in these small groups that spiritual life is possible at a depth which simply cannot be fitted into the normal groups of present-day congregations.

The criticism this implies of the empirical church and its local congregations should be met not merely by pointing out that a critical attitude is one sign of health in the church, involving as it does a mutual dialog between the different charisms. It needs also to be pointed out that by their criticism the spiritual fellowships also bear witness to their hope for the church, even though they are seeking new forms of church fellowship. The report of our Colloquy in the Strasbourg Institute made the following comment on this point: "many of these groups represent an intensive and noteworthy search for new church forms more deeply rooted in our God-

appointed human and historical situation than the existing forms; these groups raise very sharply the question of how to live, understand and proclaim the gospel in our actual human situations."<sup>11</sup>

It is right to set down this positive aspect first, before proceeding to itemize the dangers attendant on any separation of these groups from the universal fellowship. It should be remembered, however, that things can be done today in small groups which are still impossible in the established congregations simply because the necessary spiritual conditions do not yet exist to make them possible. The authorities of both churches have to decide whether to allow these small groups to make an increasing contribution spiritually, without insisting that they should adapt themselves to the requirements of the normal parish community. In view of the responsibility of church authorities, to which appeal is so often made, a clear distinction should therefore be made between the requirements of the ordinary parish and the requirements of the small experimental ecumenical groups. In a sense we are faced here, though at another level, with the same process we already encountered earlier in the relationship between the universal church and the local churches within the fellowship of the one church, where collegiality needs to be practiced. Faced with these limited experiments, we should therefore not be too quick to introduce the argument about premature anticipations of still impossible ideals.

Faith and love within the fraternal fellowship of Christians are already in a sense an anticipation of what is to come. To fail to establish already here and now, under present conditions and on a small scale, signs of what is possible, would destroy the seeds of the future. But our pastoral responsibility requires that we should in fact cultivate these seeds. The fellowship of the church is here in fact an argument *for* rather than *against* the experience and experiments of the small groups. It is not merely the recognized church structures of today which are the *ekklesia* of Christ in a full and complete sense, so too are these challenging small fellowships, in spite of all their limitations.

These things require to be said if we are to see clearly the future possibilities of the present Catholic-Lutheran dialog. Since the spiritual life has its fulfilment in the sacramental life of the fellowship of Christians,

I should like to try now to interpret what is said in the Malta Report about the sacraments and sacramental practice in the light of the ecclesiological context just sketched.

b) *The eucharistic meal—anticipation of the consummation*

It would be more justified theologically to begin with the sacrament of baptism. But our concrete ecumenical situation compels us to begin instead by considering the eucharist. This for several reasons.

Firstly, because it is common knowledge that divided Christians have already started to practice celebrating the Lord's Supper together. (We need not discuss here the great variety of forms of this common celebration.) Examples continue to multiply.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, because according to both Catholics and Lutherans, it is in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper that church fellowship finds its fulfilment. Where Christians celebrate the eucharistic meal together, therefore, we can no longer speak of a separation between them.

Thirdly, we might also add that, in the Catholic view in particular, the sacramental fulness of the mystery of salvation is present in the eucharist and, consequently, it is primarily in this sacrament that the sacramental life is concentrated.

From this it follows that precisely here, in this question of altar fellowship between Catholics and Lutherans, and other non-Catholics too, we touch the most sensitive point of present ecumenical discussion. An eloquent outward sign of this was the fact that it was precisely on this point that some of the Catholic members of the commission decided to register a separate opinion. This merely reflects accurately the position in the wider ecumenical dialog. On this point the official vote of the Roman Catholic Church has adopted an almost completely fixed attitude.<sup>13</sup> It would be jumping to conclusions, however, to think that in the discussions just concluded this problem was given a negative answer.

<sup>12</sup> V. Vajta, *Interkommunion—mit Rom?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969) provides further information. See also Lewis C. Mudge, *The Crumbling Walls* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970).

<sup>13</sup> The position stated in 1970 in connection with the Week of Prayer for Unity by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (*Documentation Catholique*, February, 1970) has not changed since.

<sup>11</sup> *Die Zukunft des Ökumenismus*, opt. cit., fn. 1, p. 101.



Certainly, no final decision is yet in sight. "The various experiments in common celebration of the Lord's Supper are also signs of the seriousness of the question and make urgent additional theological and canonical clarification." (no. 69) We should not interpret this statement as an irresolute postponement of the issue. For the commission in fact also presented certain pointers which could help solve it. And the very seriousness of the question pleads its urgency.

The commission dealt with the question of altar fellowship as one consequence of certain theological premises, and this in itself is enough to show that it had no intention of closing the discussion. The problems are at two levels: there is the need for theological clarification, and there is the question of the practical steps to be taken by the church authorities.

With regard to the theological clarifications: the usual ecclesiological argument that altar fellowship presupposes church fellowship was placed in a new light by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The commission was able to point out that "there is no exclusive identity between the one church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church". (no. 71) This necessarily means, as the commission goes on to say, that "the unity of the Roman Catholic Church is not perfect but that it strives toward the perfect unity of the church. In this sense the eucharistic celebration in the Catholic church also suffers from imperfection." (no. 71) Unfortunately this will remain so until this fundamental insight is reflected in the statements of the Roman magisterium. But the differences of opinion within the Roman Catholic Church (recognized by the commission) do *not* affect the fundamental theological truth brought out by the Second Vatican Council. The differences are over the pastoral conclusions people are prepared to draw from this truth.

Much more difficult theologically is the question of the recognition of the ministry as a precondition of eucharistic celebration. "Uncertainty concerning a common doctrine of the ministerial office still makes for difficulties in reciprocal intercommunion agreements. However, the realization of eucharistic fellowship should not depend exclusively on full recognition of the office of the ministry." (no. 73) This latter statement was not accepted unanimously; it was on this point that the separate views were registered. We seemed to have stumbled on the major obstacle to altar fellowship between Catholics

and Lutherans. But this reserve cannot be properly understood without dealing positively with the question of the church's ministry. The fact that even Catholic theologians are divided about the solution means that further clarification of the problem is not ruled out.

It is impossible, however, to escape the impression that this hesitancy on the part of the theologians was due mainly to the repeatedly expressed attitude of the Roman magisterium. This brings me to the second level of problems in the question of eucharistic celebration, the practical and canonical level. Several times the commission addresses the authorities and expects more from them than merely the obvious concern for credal unity. The church's official ministers "must also take care lest they hinder the work of the Spirit. They should by their helpful instructions lead the community of believers in hope for the reunion of all separated Christians." (no. 69) Does not the very mention of a leadership here imply an anticipation which may be expected precisely from those entrusted with pastoral responsibility? The fact that the flock cannot perform everything their leaders do, is no reason why the latter should not be allowed to enter and explore the territory ahead of us.

Those with pastoral responsibility in the church have already had to allow those who, under special spiritual conditions, were ready for it, the freedom to anticipate the common meal in particular ecumenical celebrations. The Report comments generally on this: "But pastoral responsibility also demands taking into account the situation of those faithful who suffer in special ways under the necessities of separation or who because of their convictions think that they must seek fellowship in Christ in joint celebrations of the Lord's Supper." (no. 74) Such an anticipation is envisaged in practice as follows: "At present it should already be recommended that the church authorities, on the basis of what is already shared in faith and sacrament and as sign and anticipation of the promised and hoped for unity, make possible occasional acts of intercommunion as, for example, during ecumenical events or in the pastoral care of those involved in mixed marriages." (no. 73)

In my view, statements such as these contain a promise for the future only if they are understood against the background of the promise of spiritual potential for the future which we see today in the small ecumenical groups. It is in these circles that we should venture a responsible start on



journeying together into the future.<sup>14</sup> The future before us is a promising one only if the possibilities of new structures of fellowship such as are envisaged here can be found not merely in isolated individual cases but also in ecumenical germinal cells. Otherwise all we have before us are desperate measures which are in one way or another inescapable.

It may be objected that the reservations illustrated, for example, in the registering of a separate opinion in the commission, are surely too serious even to warrant taking such a step. The reply to this objection is that the Catholic reservations within the commission related solely to "mutual agreements for intercommunion". On the other hand, all Catholics agreed that in special cases, church authorities can be recommended to grant limited admission (of Lutherans) to (the Catholic Church's) eucharistic celebrations. This, of course, is "only" a recommendation, but it is nevertheless theologically based and pastorally responsible. What will Rome's answer to it be? Let us hope that it will prove possible to give concrete expression to a sign of the future and a courageous anticipation of the deepest hope to which all ecumenical gatherings pay lip service.

The Lutherans' response to the commission's recommendations could be no less decisive for the future. It will certainly be objected that for the Catholic Church to recommend only a *one-sided* admission to eucharistic celebrations is false to the spirit of ecumenism, and that progress is only possible as mutuality is maintained. All I should like briefly to reply to that here is that, so far as the behavior of the Catholic Church is concerned, we may confidently leave it to their own theologians to decide if mutuality could become a possibility. So far as we ourselves are concerned, however, I believe we have quite enough to do in our own ranks to answer the question whether a Lutheran Christian can take any part at all in a Catholic mass. It is equally difficult to find a clearcut answer to this question among us Lutherans. On the other hand, we should

all be agreed to invite to our eucharistic celebrations members of the Catholic Church in cases where there are adequate spiritual grounds for doing so, and thus to open the way to the future in a brotherly and responsible way. There seem to me good grounds today for the view that the Lutheran Church is now in a position to support mutual admission to eucharistic services even in relation to the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup>

In passing it should, of course, be noted that this still leaves one other scandal untouched. On both sides, we deal far more cautiously with and even perhaps apply different standards to, members of the other church than we do in the case of those who, while undoubtedly in church law members of our own church, are from the spiritual standpoint dubiously so.

#### c) *The initiation of the eschaton through baptism*

The problem of altar fellowship will continue to occupy the Catholic-Lutheran dialog for a long time yet. But we may well ask whether we do not in fact need a fresh approach in the dialog, since from the theological angle, the arguments seem to have been pretty well exhausted. In the future it will be much more a case of being able to establish sound pastoral possibilities and responsibility. For this baptism today offers a new approach.

The significance of baptism in relation to intercommunion has long been discussed in the ecumenical movement. But the difficulty with the argument for intercommunion on the basis of baptism is that it assumed the mutual recognition of baptism on the part of the Christian churches. It was precisely this assumption, however, which was inadequately explained. Within Protestantism itself the Baptist tradition has represented a challenge for many centuries. With the entry of Orthodoxy and later of the Catholic Church into the ecumenical dialog, however, it also became painfully evident that the mutual recognition of baptism could not always be assumed. In respect of the Catholic Church the question became acute in the matter of conditional baptism and its arbitrary application, often objected to by Lutherans. The new stage we have now entered is one in which there is mutual recognition of each other's baptism. Behind this lies the whole of the recent discussion of baptismal practice, particularly of infant baptism.

<sup>14</sup> When in what follows I use the term 'anticipation' this should not be taken in the sense of a 'pretense' or 'make believe' of a reality which does not yet exist. In the responsible ecumenical groups, a reality is already in existence today which goes beyond the confessional boundaries. It is this which must find expression and thereby become an 'anticipation' of the unity of the people of God which will only be revealed fully at the end of its pilgrim journey.

<sup>15</sup> I have developed my arguments in support of this position in *Interkommunion—mit Rom?* (op. cit., fn. 12), pp. 55f.



When the Malta Report describes our common baptism as an important starting point for the question of eucharistic fellowship, here again it must be said that recognition, if fully implemented, could carry us much further. Some recent examples have certainly made this clear. For example, in Belgium recognition is accompanied by the specific declaration that what is involved is not merely the recognition of baptism in and for itself, but at the same time there is a recognition of the church fellowship within which this baptism was administered.<sup>16</sup> In other words, where there is an explicit mutual recognition of baptism, it will no longer be possible to maintain the view that altar fellowship must be rejected because of the absence of church fellowship. Instead, it must be concluded that "this one church of Christ is actualized in an analogous manner also in other churches". (no. 71) It follows from this that a celebration of the Lord's Supper in which people who by baptism are in principle invited to the Lord's Supper cannot in fact take part, is incomplete (*ibid.*).<sup>17</sup> The Lutherans make the same point further on in even stronger terms: "A celebration of the Lord's Supper in which baptized believers may not participate suffers from an inner contradiction and from the start, therefore, does not fulfil the purpose for which the Lord established it. For the Lord's Supper is the reconciling acceptance of men through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ." (no. 72)

Underlying this view connecting baptism with the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the conviction that baptism as initiation admits the person baptized into the eschatological event of salvation. Baptism is not something apart but the beginning of a way. In the promise of dying and rising again with Christ, baptism is at the same time a sealing with the eschatological Spirit who already in an anticipatory way, in faith, causes us to share in what is coming to us in the consummation on the basis of the history of Jesus. The baptized person's journey in faith is not an empty "ethical" happening,

but the living Lord becoming formed in him. At the same time this Lord feeds him in the Holy Supper and gives him what was promised in baptism and will be revealed through bodily resurrection on the last day.

Edmund Schlink has pointed out the implications of baptismal practice for the eucharistic practice of the divided churches.<sup>18</sup> We cannot repeat his arguments here but simply wish to expand them on the basis of what we have said above. My question may perhaps be formulated as follows: if baptism is to be regarded as an anticipatory initiation whose operation is not exhausted in a momentary action but stretches from birth in baptism to resurrection, can it not also be true for the celebration of the Holy Supper that it accompanies believers along this way to this end in believing *anticipation* of the coming unity of the people of God? Thus even the Lord's Supper is an anticipatory initiation of the one people of God which will be completed at the *parousia* of Jesus, in the expectation of which the church daily receives the eucharistic meal. Is it not, therefore, necessary for believers also to anticipate this unity sacramentally in the eucharist, just as they indeed have again and again to be gathered together from their dispersion?<sup>19</sup>

The Catholic Church's new baptismal practice is a fine sacramental expression of the way which man must go in the company of the living Lord in the direction of the end. Precisely for this reason the practice of infant baptism will not be abandoned. On the contrary, its position is more secure than ever as the *gratia praeveniens* and, indeed, not as a momentary action but as the beginning of the way in which by the presence of the fellowship of believers God supports the baptized person and leads him by the Holy Spirit. Thus in baptism the anticipation takes place, but it is linked with the journeying in faith and love. This anticipation has a fundamental ecumenical significance. From here the way to intercommunion could be opened up, since the eucharist itself is affirmed as an eschatological sacrament. The mutual recognition of baptism and the dialog between the churches which is bound up with it is no sidetrack which could just

<sup>16</sup> The Belgian "Statement on the Mutual Recognition of Baptism by the Churches" (Brussels, 1971, p. 8) declares: "The commission was concerned to emphasize this recognition. The recognition of baptism is more than the assertion of its validity. It contains also the recognition of the church fellowship in which the baptism was administered and of the ministry which administered it."

<sup>17</sup> Cf. J. L. Witte, S.I., "The Basis of Intercommunion" in *Gregorianum*, vol. 51/1, 1970, p. 87 ff.

<sup>18</sup> E. Schlink, "The problem of communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church", *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, January 1972, p. 13 f.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. L. Thunberg, "Experimental Communion Fellowship" in *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, April 1970, pp. 133-145.



as well be omitted. On the contrary, it is the way which we in the ecumenical movement believed was behind us. But it turns out that we have leaped over it and today have to correct our mistake, only to find when we do so that we have been given a further chance to discover the way out from the intercommunion problem. If pastoral responsibility already begins in one's own household with baptismal practice, one will also have a better understanding of an ecumenical communion practice which does not endanger faith.

d) *Stages on the way to Christian unity.*

Thinking about baptism helps us to understand that Christian unity which is established by this sacrament is also a way, but one which because of its eschatological character can even today embrace within itself certain future hopes. The Malta Report rightly says: "Because of the anomalies of present church divisions, this unity will not be suddenly established. A process of gradual rapprochement is necessary in which various stages are possible." (no. 73) Make no mistake about it, the line of thinking which makes the restoration of unity depend on first of all being able to work out the theological discussions and pastoral measures with complete clarity and absence of ambiguity and then on that basis finding it possible immediately to restore the unity of separated Christians, is a most dangerous illusion. It fails to take faith seriously as a way and results instead in the maintenance of the *status quo*.

The realization that Christian unity can only be achieved eschatologically as a way with various stages gives the courage and frankness to create signs of the future here and now in present conditions and to travel along this way harmoniously with other Christians. Theologians often rightly complain that we still lack the appropriate concepts to express this pilgrim situation. It could perhaps be said that if we lack such concepts, then not a word, indeed not words at all—not even words of lamentation—should be used, but deeds should follow, deeds which in the courage of faith clarify our way to the end. In the period immediately ahead of us, it will perhaps be more than ever a matter of making concrete and giving visible expression to the unity which is already possible among us.

At what stage do the Catholic and Lutheran Churches of the west stand today in the achievement of unity? What has already been said was an attempt to answer this question.

Perhaps today (almost ten years after the beginning of the Second Vatican Council) we are in a position to agree in our answer free from total disappointment and ecumenical euphoria alike. The fact that there are different stages on the way means that to one there must be a call to patience, to another a call to press forward courageously.

Perhaps the problem of unity has concentrated too much on the question of altar fellowship. Consequently many lose heart, especially those who have become clear through the discussions that here there is a clash of stubborn difficult positions. Those who can only conceive of ecumenical efforts in connection with the question of altar fellowship will be the first to be disappointed. But even in their case, we must patiently spell out the various possible stages, as we must also in the case of those who, wrapped up in themselves, want to preserve their inheritance in a way which suggests that nothing in history has changed.

Our task in the present Lutheran-Catholic dialog is in the first place to reduce the differences to their true proportions. This should clear the way for the unity which is already possible today. The disappointed and the indifferent should alike be told that a radical change has taken place in the theological situation as in the pastoral situation of the churches in recent years. Not merely has it become possible to work together in social and charitable programs but Christians on both sides of the divide can come together to pray and to hear the word of God. A broad field of spiritual and secular cooperation is possible for the churches today. Make use of these opportunities.<sup>20</sup>

This is the simple and direct question today about the future of our churches. The answer has to come from the congregations and also, above all, from the (regional and international) church authorities. Coordinating committees, theological commissions, and ecumenical services during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, or visits from church dignitaries are far from an answer to the question put to us. Where today in local, diocesan or regional church circles is a church strategy being worked out under the call for

<sup>20</sup> Cf. V. Vajta, "Die gemeinsame Verantwortung der Kirchen für die Verkündigung des Evangeliums in der heutigen Welt" (The common responsibility of the churches for the proclamation of the gospel in the world today) in *Oecumenica* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), p. 337f.



the future, to do together what we can already do together with the highest authority to back us? Where today are plans being made officially and systematically for the common and continuing study of Holy Scripture or for preparations being made to create a place for common prayer by Christians in the divided congregations? Is it not rather a case of being content with occasional so-called ecumenical functions while letting things run on in their accustomed ways, lest there be any "disturbance" of the life of the congregations? But how can a new spiritual life grow on the soil of the old church unless concrete opportunities are being created by joint plans? In these circumstances how can we be surprised when the groups which venture to experiment with this growing together start to depart from the congregations because they fail to find any support there for ecumenism? How shall we be able to bring back these Christians who desire to find a genuine life of discipleship, so that through them there may be a renewal of the congregation and not its disintegration?

Only as experience of common spiritual life is gained in these small groups will the ways to shared communion open up as has indeed already happened in some places—despite the somewhat ridiculous sudden unanimity on the part of the church authorities in prohibiting such a thing. What Christendom has a right to expect from the responsible leaders of the church are energetic initiatives which lay the foundation for a new reality in the future. What is worth hearing about is not what is forbidden but what encouragement is given to what is possible—and in spite of everything, this amounts to a great deal, the possibility of a shared journey with the gospel. Only let us take the initial steps and allow the Holy Spirit to do his work of achieving the unity of divided Christians through Jesus Christ.

### III. Accepting the Future

I began by pointing out that the present confronts us with decisions which will determine our future. There can be no denying that we have various ways to choose from. I do not mean in the first place the variety of legitimate theological solutions and of possible practical pastoral measures. I am thinking rather of an existential decision in which everything is summed up as a choice between life and death. Let us accept what directs us forward into the future and leads us out from the exile of separation.

How is this to happen? It is not enough for an international and interconfessional commission to do its work. That is only preliminary. We know from history that decisions of councils and synods have only become significant for the life of the church when they have been received by the people of God. What is needed now is to begin such an acceptance process. The problems have been worked out and it is now time for the Christian people and each individual believer to accept the historical change which has taken place in the life of our divided churches. The regional level assumes extra importance here as we work out what has been set forth in broad characters about the newly acquired understanding of the gospel and about the new structural possibilities arising out of that understanding and present it to the churches. No church can ignore the findings presented by the joint commission, nor should they evade the drawing of the necessary conclusions from those findings.

The church of tomorrow is being born today. We live in a present which is filled by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

## A Report on the Summary of the Finnish Lutheran-Russian Orthodox Discussions

Although dialog between the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches has been under discussion for some time, there has been remarkably little in the way of concrete results. Among the most advanced are the discussions on the national level between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Russia. Rev. Maunu Sinnemäki, secretary to the Archbishop and also to the Commission of the Foreign Affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, has provided a brief introduction to the summary documents which were adopted at the two meetings held thus far. The text of these documents follows his brief report.

Since 1965 there have been casual meetings and official visits between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Russia. Through Archbishop Martti Simojoki's initiative, theological discussions on subjects agreed to beforehand were included in the visiting programs. The first such workshop was held at the Sinappi parish work center in Turku on March 19-22, 1970, and the second at the Holy Sergei's Trinity Monastery in Zagorsk on December 12-16, 1971. In principle it has been agreed that the next discussion will be held in Finland in the early spring of 1974.

On both occasions two themes were agreed upon beforehand on which theologians from both sides prepared papers. With these papers as a starting point, there was first a plenary discussion, and then separate sections formulated propositions for common theses. These summaries were worked over in plenary discussions. Finally, the heads of both delegations signed both the communiqué from the discussions and all the theses.

The themes of the Turku meeting were, "The Eucharist as Manifestation of the Unity of Believers", and "The Theological Foundations of the Churches' Peace Efforts". The themes of the Zagorsk meeting were closely related to the first, namely, "The Eucharist, particularly its Sacrificial Character", and "Justice and Violence". The themes preliminarily suggested for the next meeting concern the ministry, and the Christian doctrine of salvation, whereas the socio-ethical theme is still completely open.

On both occasions the head of the Finnish delegation was Archbishop Martti Simojoki, and the head of the Russian delegation was the Archbishop of Dmitrov, Filaret, who is also the Principal of the Zagorsk Seminary and Spiritual Academy. The Finnish lectures on the eucharist were delivered by Licentiate of Theology Simo Kiviranta, Professor Aimo

T. Nikolainen, and Dean Samuel Lehtonen; and on theological problems of peace by Pastor Jouko Martikainen, Professor Kauko Pirinen, and Docent Kalevi Toiviainen. The Russian lecturers on the eucharist were the Bishop of Astrakan, Mihail (twice), and Professor V. D. Sarytshev; and on the theology of peace, Archbishop Filaret and Docent A. I. Osipov. In addition, other theologians from both churches took part in the discussions. In Zagorsk Metropolitan Nikodim also participated in part of the meeting.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland invited observers from the Orthodox Church of Finland, and the Faith and Order Secretariat of the World Council of Churches to the meeting in Turku. To the Zagorsk meeting, the Orthodox Church of Russia invited professors from the Zagorsk Spiritual Academy as observers. In both meetings, the observers took part in the discussions.

The following are summaries of the theological discussions from both meetings.

### I. TURKU, 1970

#### 1. *Summary of the discussions dealing with the eucharist*

After hearing the lectures from both churches on topics of 1) Eucharist as a Manifestation of the Unity of Believers, and 2) The Theological Foundations of the Churches' Peace Efforts, both delegations discussed them and came to the following conclusions, which in turn were approved by both groups:

Both parties consider that the treatment of the theme "Eucharist as a Manifestation of the Unity of Believers" chosen for the discussion, has been beneficial to both churches.

With the help of the lectures and the subsequent discussion, the parties have understood much more precisely and deeply the other party's viewpoints on this question. This ap-



plies to the theme in general as well as to its many details.

In examining some of the aspects of the material handled, certain similarities have been recognized in the understandings of both sides.

The continuation of mutual contact has been regarded as appropriate. It was felt that this could best be done by organizing similar theological discussions in the future, discussions whose purpose would be to examine doctrinal and confessional questions that are particularly characteristic of each church. Such questions have already appeared in the discussions held.

Publication of the materials of this meeting by both churches is considered necessary.

Both parties examined the question of the eucharist and decided to present the results of the discussions in the following form, which is founded on the belief that is given by the Bible, preserved by the early Christian tradition, and confessed by the undivided church.

In the following questions which arose in the handling of the eucharist and the unity of Christians, a consensus between the parties was reached.

The eucharist is a secret, a divine essence, in front of which even the most penetrating theology becomes silent, feeling holy awe; and which is received with the help of the Holy Spirit through faith.

In the eucharist, a Christian through the influence of the Holy Spirit is united with his whole being both in an externally and internally recognizable way in Christ when he receives Christ's body and blood in the form of bread and wine (John 6:56).

The eucharist, as a sacrament instituted by Christ, is the clearest manifestation of the Christians' unity with the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, and through him also of the Christians' mutual unity as members of the church, the body of Christ.

The unity of Christians in the eucharist belongs properly to their spiritual life, but at the same time, it creates mutual unity between Christians over racial or national boundaries, and this spreads to the world that peace which Christ has decreed to his disciples and followers.

The unity in the eucharist is the deepest manifestation of the oneness of the church. That is why the eucharist cannot be used as a tool to bring about unity with regard to the considerable doctrinal differences that exist between the churches. Both sides must strive very responsibly in trying to reach unanimity on the questions involving the eucharist, and the whole doctrine of the church.

Different understandings have been found in the following instances:

Both sides confess that the body and blood of Jesus Christ, God and man, are present in substance in the form of bread and wine by his own spoken words of institution (Matt. 26:26-28; I Cor. 11:24-27), but in the interpretation of this truth the views of the two sides differ.

Both sides recognize the sacrificial nature of the eucharist but they differ in the interpretation of what this sacrifice means.

The questions in which different understandings and interpretations have arisen will have to be studied further from terminological, exegetical, dogmatic, liturgical, and historical standpoints at future discussions, and the views of both sides have to be compared in more depth and detail, taking into consideration the ecumenical discussions held on the subject, and especially the research of the Faith and Order Commission.

## 2. Summary of the discussions dealing with peace

In the discussions on the theological foundations of peace efforts, the delegations of the Orthodox Church of Russia and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland have together agreed on the following:

The question about war and peace has never in the history of mankind been as difficult and timely as at present.

The advancement of technology has on the one hand revealed to mankind enormous constructive possibilities, and on the other hand has given man tools for destruction with powers never before seen.

Nuclear weapons have changed the nature of war. Their use cannot be approved in any circumstances, not even in so-called just wars.

The balance of power which is built on the "balance of terror" created by nuclear weapons, cannot bring about lasting peace.

Peace with God is a prerequisite for the striving of Christians for peace on earth.

Christians cannot withdraw from their responsibility in peace efforts by appealing to the fact that the peace of God concerns only individuals, or that a complete state of peace is realized only at the end of time.

Mankind forms a whole. God created life good and complete, but because of Adam's fall, it has been shattered. Redeemed and reconciled by Christ, Christians have by serving, by proclaiming reconciliation, and by creating unity to try and repair that which sin has broken. The witness of peace by Christians is effective when they, keeping peace amongst themselves, "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

In working for peace, Christians have to work together not only with each other but also with all people of good will.

Peace requires justice, which includes also a state of social, economic and international justice. Because of this, Christians have to continually and carefully search to see where people are without justice, and where justice is threatened. Christians have to strive together against the exploitation of their fellowman, the degrading of the value of man, racial discrimination and all forms of discrimination, hunger, poverty, injustice, and against everything which is a threat to world peace and normal life.

It would be most beneficial for mankind, if injustice was removed by peaceful methods. Therefore, the churches have to support and also actively take part in research on peace and conflict. In the search for solutions, the relevant viewpoints and justice have to be given priority.

The churches have to try to support social and economic renewal in the world. In their striving for peace, the churches have to focus special attention on activities which are preventive, such as development aid and development cooperation.

The delegations realized that the time allotted for handling of the peace question was too short, and that discussions between both churches concerning peace problems should be continued. The theme for the next time could be, for example, justice and violence.

## II. ZAGORSK, 1971

### 3. *Summary of the second discussion dealing with the eucharist*

In the first theological discussion between the Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Russia in Sinappi, Turku on March 19-22, 1970, there were common viewpoints on both sides in the summary of the discussions concerning the eucharist.

In addition to the above, there were two basic viewpoints about the eucharist where the understandings of the parties differed. Both sides confessed that the body and blood of Jesus Christ, God and man, are present in substance in the form of bread and wine by his own spoken words of institution, but in the interpretation of this truth the views of both sides differed. Similarly, both confessed the sacrificial nature of the eucharist, but differed from each other in the interpretation of what this sacrifice means.

In the summary of the previous meeting there was a wish that the question of the eucharist as a whole should be dealt with further in joint discussions, and that especially the two aforementioned themes should come under scrutiny.

In accordance with this wish, the problems concerning the eucharist were further studied during the present meeting. The meeting heard lectures on the subject prepared by both sides, lectures which were handled in a spirit of mutual consideration and Christian love.

The papers presented and the exchange of ideas showed that the viewpoints of the parties reached consensus in the following instances:

#### *The real presence of Christ in the eucharist*

The sacrament of the eucharist has a central meaning in God's eternal saving act of man through Jesus Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

In the eucharist, the bread and wine are the body and blood of our Savior. Christ is truly present in the eucharist in the fullness of his person as God and man. When we partake of this meal, we become partakers of Christ as members of his body, i.e., the church.



### *Christ's sacrifice and the eucharist*

The once-and-for-all sacrifice of Calvary cannot be repeated, and its saving effect reaches all times. The eucharist is not the repetition of the sacrifice of Calvary, but is a manifestation of its saving significance and effect in the church's and in every Christian's life to-day.

In the same way that Christ has made the sacrifice at Calvary, he also gives himself in the eucharist in the worship service of the church. That is why the eucharist is the instrument of the Holy Spirit for salvation.

The whole church of Christ participates in our eucharistic celebration; we are assured of this because the church is the body of Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ is received in the eucharist through faith, which is effected by the Holy Spirit. The eucharist mediates communion with the Son of God who became man, Jesus Christ, and makes the believers partakers of his being. That is why the gifts of the eucharist are the forgiveness of sins, and sanctification.

In the following instances, however, there appeared differences between the Orthodox and Lutheran doctrines:

According to Orthodox doctrine, the bread and wine become in substance Christ's body and blood in the eucharist. This change in substance remains indefinitely in the holy gifts regardless of their use.

According to Lutheran doctrine, the words of institution of the eucharist are words of creation, which, as such, are enough to assure the real presence of Christ at the eucharist, in the bread and wine. The Lutherans do not use the eucharistic bread and wine outside of the service.

The Orthodox Church gives serious emphasis to the sacrificial nature of the eucharist. The eucharistic sacrifice is brought by Christ himself, while the church as his body participates in it. The immediate participation of the church members in the eucharistic sacrifice is, above all, prayer, which includes praise, thanksgiving and petition.

Even though the teachings of the Lutheran Church emphasize the very close contact between Christ's sacrifice and the eucharist, nevertheless, it avoids using the word "sacrifice" in connection with communion service,

because it wants to underline that Christ's Calvary sacrifice is sufficient once and for all. As such, the eucharist is also to the Lutheran Church a meal of hope, joy and thanksgiving.

### *Forthcoming discussion:*

The two parties feel that it would be appropriate and rewarding to both sides to continue the discussions, and the themes could, for example, be the ministry, and the Christian doctrine of salvation, both of which are connected to the problems already discussed.

### *4. Summary of the discussions on justice and violence*

As agreed by the delegates of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Russia at the meeting in Sinapi, Turku, on March 19-22, 1970, it was desired to continue to examine together the subject of justice and violence, and as a result three lectures were held on this subject at this meeting.

After discussing these lectures in their meeting, the participants came to the following conclusions:

God has created mankind to be one, and has redeemed it through his Son, Jesus Christ. When the Son of God became man, he took it upon himself to carry the sin and suffering of the world. As the follower of its Lord, the church takes part in the anxiety of the world, but also in the hope revealed by Christ's becoming man and his redemption.

The witness of the churches on behalf of peace and justice is founded thus on God's act. Christians have been called together to be peacemakers. This will of the Lord is the starting point for the witness for peace by the churches. That is why they can do this task only by being faithful to the one who sent them, and by using his message as their source.

The churches witness to the will of their Lord in man's world, which is damaged by sin. This means that they are forced constantly to ask for the real meaning of, and means of attaining, peace and justice. Thus, they cannot be satisfied with the decisions made during the course of their history, but have bravely to search for new possibilities together with those who have the same objectives. When in the atomic age every local war can spread into an atomic war, Christians and churches have to bear more responsibility than before in their efforts to avoid interna-

tional conflicts, and in strengthening peace among nations.

In witnessing that their Lord is the Prince of Peace, the Christians cannot forget prayers for peace, and for the victims of violence. They want to repent from their own and their nation's sins. Only thus can they be peacemakers.

At the same time, the churches are sure that lasting peace cannot be built upon violence or the threat of it. Peace demands the accomplishment of justice, but as Christians we know that even that is not enough without brotherly love between people and nations.

In their proclamation, the churches have to keep peace and justice in sight. And then it should not be forgotten that people together are responsible for the preservation of mankind, and for the right use of nature that God has given them. Social structures have to be formed so that they further the cooperation of people. Discrimination against people because of race, religion, nationality, or sex cannot be tolerated. All nations have to have an opportunity to freely develop their own way of life in cooperation with others.

Christian love demands that Christians actively take part in building relations within their society, nation, state, and between nations. That is why Christians have to actively oppose such injustices as wars of aggression, colonialism, race segregation and other forms of racial discrimination, economic exploitation, and injustice within society and state.

The participants of the discussion stressed especially the significance of disarmament. Likewise, they felt it important that at the first opportunity a European security conference should be held, which the Finnish government has offered to host in Helsinki. The calling together of this conference undoubtedly would advance the strivings of nations toward realizing justice.

Lasting peace in society cannot exist where humane life is prohibited. Therefore the obedience of a Christian toward the authorities has its limits. Likewise, lasting peace among nations cannot be built upon imperialistic strivings for benefits.

Both parties deemed it necessary that in future discussions the handling of related questions be continued.



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# LITERATURE SURVEY

## A Review of Recent Theological Publications

Edited by Erich Weingärtner

No. 3, 1972

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ALEXANDER HOLLERBACH/HANS MAIER (Eds.):

### Christlicher Friede und Welt Friede

Geschichtliche Entwicklung und Gegenwartsprobleme.

*Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 1971.*

*148 pp., hard cover, DM 12.00*

"Peace is a desideratum, not only in the political world but also in political research. Despite all the efforts in the field of peace research (which is still more a matter of promise than of accomplishment), scientific analyses of the complex area of peace—war—conflict are still scant, vague and vulnerable." With this sobering statement, the editors introduce the collection of essays under review, to which "a symposium of the Görres Society in Münster in October 1969 gave rise" (p. 7). In particular, they refer to "the gulf between the reality of war and counter-war in the modern world on the one hand, and its scientific comprehension through sociological methods on the other".

The various approaches to peace research are probably united in their aim of overcoming this gulf, but beyond this there is an absence of "fundamentals and common principles that have been secured even in outline" (E. Krippendorff: *Friedensforschung*, Second Edition, 1970, p. 11). There are undoubtedly many reasons for this unsatisfactory state of affairs: one of these is the fact that in this "infant endeavor", many different presuppositions and question complexes come together and frequently influence the various efforts in an unidentified and unreflected manner. Another reason is that no study has been made of peace concepts and peace efforts from the past.

The aim of the volume under review is not so much to make good this omission as to "make people aware of it". The intention is to "convert into clearly-defined scientific questions problems which are felt in an unclear though urgent way—or at least to begin such an operationalization" (p. 7). The title gives promise of reflection on and clarification of relationships existing between "Christian peace and world peace", i.e. the relationships between Christianity and the institutions which represent it on the one hand and politics and its determining forces on the other. But this touches on a delicate matter, a fact that is brought out fairly clearly in several of the essays. For example, W. Schaumann ("The safeguarding of peace as a central problem for

international law today", pp. 53-73) refers to the remarkable fact that when plans were being made to set up a "World University for Peace Research, the two classical disciplines dealing with endeavors for peace, namely theology and international law" were ignored entirely (p. 53). The questions which this circumstance brings to his mind in regard to the planners' expectations from international law, may with equal justification be applied to theology (cf. p. 53). H. Maier ("The Christian concept of peace and the peace of nations in modern times", pp. 35-51) outlines even more clearly the charge of negligible effectiveness with regard to peace efforts which is levelled against Christianity by "the various atheistic humanisms of our time" (p. 35). Moreover, similar reservations, or even polemics against Christianity and its institutional representatives, seem to have induced several of the authors to counter such attacks, by pointing to positive Christian action towards the creation and safeguarding of peace. This could explain some of the apologetic undertones that can be detected when the subject is mentioned (e.g. H. Conrad: "The rule of law and the notion of peace in the Middle Ages and in early modern times", pp. 9-34, 9 f. et passim).

The direct and indirect allusions to the controversial position of church and theology in the powerplay of war and peace do, in fact, correspond to a currently widespread evaluation (cf. the overview on "a few trends in existing peace-research" by J. Galtung in *Krippendorff* loc. cit. pp. 517-557, with particular reference to pp. 520 ff.). But even this volume of essays seems to be symptomatic of this situation, since there is no theologian among the authors. This means that the expectations aroused by the volume's title—precisely because of the controversial relationship of "Christian peace and world peace"—are somewhat disappointed. Placing the accent on areas "which modern peace research often neglects—history, international law, diplomacy" (p. 7) deliberately restricts the subject area. So the reader will content himself with asking in which of the three areas Christian elements come into play within the individual essays.

In the first contribution "The rule of law and the concept of peace in the Middle Ages and early modern times" (pp. 9-34) H. Conrad deals with several contributions which the Christian Church "made in the fight against violence and injustice" during the period mentioned (p. 9). In this connection he even speaks of "a page of glory for the church", but he qualifies the remarks by adding "that mediaeval man thought more realistically about the problem of achieving peace on this earth than many of those who preach even Christian concepts of peace in our day" (pp. 9 f.); he points to the views then held about the imperfection of this world, man's propensity for evil, and Christ's teaching that "the Kingdom of everlasting peace belongs to the next world" (p. 10).

The results of Conrad's analysis can be summarized as follows: in the *national realm*, the church started by making a peace-keeping institution of the "*peace of God*", which the state then developed into a "national peace movement"; in addition the church helped to humanize martial law and finally succeeded in establishing an armistice at the time of the Crusades. In the *supranational realm* it was, above all, thoughts of the Christian universal kingdom that had made themselves felt. Conrad refers to Dante's vision of the "emperor of peace, who was to bring about justice" (p. 19), and to the influence on this and similar concepts of the idea of the *imperium romanum* and, lastly, to the remarkable reflections of the "journalist Pierre Dubois", who had wanted to put a "European Confederation of States" in the place of the universal



kingdom, in order to safeguard peace (p. 22). In his section, Conrad estimates the church's share in appropriate endeavors for peace as "not inconsiderable". All the same, his remarks make the limits of these efforts very evident: I am thinking of the very questionable results of the Crusades and of the situation that peace initiatives have shifted increasingly from the church to the state. Conrad does not follow up his initial statement, to consider the extent to which these limits and developments may have been determined by the "realistic" assessment of the possibilities of peace on earth, as influenced by Christian other-worldly hopes. This is all the more regrettable because it is just such eschatological aspects of Christian peace discussion that play such an important part in today's debate. (cf. H.-J. Gamm: *Aggression and capacity for peace in Germany*, 1968).

H. Maier looks into the question of the relationship between "the Christian concept of peace and the peace made by governments in modern times", and how this relationship "had been expressed in the history of the Christian nations of Europe" (pp. 35-51). In doing so he picks out three examples from the extensive process of European nation-building and through them throws light on the influence of Christian thinking: the peace of God, arbitral jurisdiction between the nations and the development of classical international law. In contrast to Conrad, whose arguments he touches on in his first two points, Maier traces the effect of peace efforts in the Middle Ages down to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Holy Alliance, Hague Conference, League of Nations).

Maier sees "classical international law as the most important contribution made by Christian thinking on peace and peace policy to the birth of modern state peace. It owes the main impulses to the Christian tradition: the idea of *res publica christiana*: the idea that monarchs and states were equal, as prerequisite for the parity of nations and of national sovereignty, and finally the notion of an international arbitral jurisdiction and a league of Christian nations" (p. 39). In regard to the further development of such impulses, Maier also speaks of a "movement of gradual secularization" (p. 39). Thus we have in this sector the same image that Conrad evokes with his "peace of God".

This aspect of secularization raises special, specifically theological questions, but these have not been given a place in the historian's considerations. A kind of incarnation can be discerned in such secularization, but, one wonders whether within such a movement Christian motives made themselves felt only at the beginning, or if perhaps they had always had an innovative function. Furthermore, I miss some substantiating evidence for the assertion that Christian influences were at work in the development in question, the more so because the talk of Christian traditions and the implied loosening of these traditions from their institutional sponsors opens a wide range of possible interpretations.

In Maier's final assessment of the peace efforts among the Christian nations of Europe between the 11th and 18th centuries, the following discovery is particularly significant: the Christian concept of peace made itself felt "only within the framework of intra-European law and within the confines of a peculiarly Christian ethic". Maier sees the reason for this as the "lack of effective sanctions against those who violated the peace" (p. 48). Furthermore, he points to the fact that with Immanuel Kant the continuing efforts to overcome the contrast between theory and practice had moved "from the

realm of a Christian peace concept in the narrower sense into the broader circle of modern internationalism and pacifism".

It is impossible to do more than mention Maier's further comments on the development of peace concepts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular under the influence of the rising democracy and the associated changes in "national peace areas" (p. 46). Nor can I do more than simply refer to the analogy he makes between the national and the international fields. By means of this analogy he supports his case for real prospects of peace (pp. 48 f.).

Not until his closing remarks about formulas of agreement in modern peace settlements does he bring up again the key question: "What remains for the Christian?" His answer comes to this: Christianity has in the past definitely made its own contribution to peace, but now and in the future it must fall into line with "secular" peace efforts.

In saying this, Maier is confirming the charge cited at the beginning that, while preaching the idea of peace, the Christian, as such, can do no more than others to achieve peace.

This finding may sound harsh to Christian ears, but can the historian come to any other conclusion? Anyone trying to answer this by no means easy question will consider both the historical source material of Christian work for peace and the factors which determine Maier's judgment of history and also his interpretations of history (e.g. p. 40) and lend them the doubtful semblance of objectivity.

The next three essays deal primarily with aspects of the problem that concern international law and political science.

W. Schaumann demonstrates in his contribution ("The safeguarding of peace as the central problem of international law today", pp. 53-73) the preeminent importance of international law in the creation and safeguarding of peace especially because of the wide discrepancy that exists between its negative and positive definitions. Schaumann summarizes in three points the tasks of international law and comes to the conclusion that these have been fulfilled "only unsatisfactorily". Nevertheless, he sees in this failure "a challenge to improvement and renewed effort" (p. 73).

M. Albelein ("Theoretical problems of safeguarding peace, with particular reference to deterrent action", pp. 75-105) examines the different peace theories from the angle mentioned. Christian contributions are certainly referred to in his essay, but here too, as in the others, only in the part that concerns history (pp. 76-77). One possibility for including the Christian motive in present-day efforts is offered by Albelein's allusions to specific educational tasks, the list of which he deduces from "a detailed analysis of the causes of the absence of peace" (p. 104).

S. Schnippenkoetter ("Ban on the use of force and the renunciation of force as a means of safeguarding peace", pp. 107-124) follows up three variants of the concept of non-violence and classifies them according to their binding force in law and their political effectiveness: the acknowledged legal norm of renunciation of violence, contractually regulated renunciation of violence and (as the "least binding dimension")



"those political engagements which are entered into by resolutions made in collective procedure" (p. 118). The results of his considerations on these points turn out to be modest, at the same time giving the impression of one-sidedness, since he sees the threat to the existing balance of power as coming from the Soviet side only (p. 123).

The final essay, by E. O. Czempiel ("The Christian and the political science concept of peace", pp. 125-147) gives more scope again to Christian thinking on peace; he develops a new approach out of the crucial relationship between "the Christian and the political science concept of peace". "It drops away from the contents of the Christian concept of peace, but only in order to show the political-historical road to the realization of these contents." (p. 125)

In his arguments, Christian notions of peace are included in the objectives of political peace plans and endeavors. In other words, with the help of political science considerations, Christian aims are operationalized. Czempiel's method of approach can be given only in brief outline: He starts off with a deliberately "minimal" definition of peace as "absence of war" (pp. 127-129). His next steps include a critical review of present theological and international thinking and its sociological premises, now out of date (pp. 129 f.) and an extensive series of political scientific and social psychological conclusions, which always remain "committed to the operational level". One can gain a general idea of them from the remarks on the interrelationship of peace and justice (pp. 131-133) and on the "fundamental change of direction" in foreign policy (pp. 133-135). Czempiel's further reflections "on a graduated integrative establishment of ever larger areas of homogeneous social order, all the way if possible to a world society" have direct consequences for Christian-inspired peace efforts: "Thus anyone who wants to establish the standard of justice which is embodied in the Christian concept of peace must first of all create the secular variant of the *Ordo*: the social unity of the world." (p. 138) However, he does not pursue such conclusions, any more than he does the subsequent steps of his peace concept, contenting himself with explaining the consequences of his first step.

He summarizes his political conclusions as follows: "For the achievement of peace, a peace-oriented foreign policy must be in operation, a similar political orientation must be induced in other members of the system and the resulting processes must be institutionalized" (p. 139 cf. the subsequent pages).

Taken as a whole, Czempiel's comments indicate the weakness of Christian peace endeavors in the past and also the tasks of similarly motivated efforts in the present and future. For both directions, he allocates to the "social dimension" the role of a decisive value standard. And only here does the task of considering these reflections from the theological angle begin, but the task lies outside the scope of Czempiel's essay.

Despite, or perhaps because of the apologetic tendency of some of the essays, the booklet has, as a whole, a sobering effect in regard to the part played by Christian concepts and efforts in the creation and safeguarding of peace. *First*, such a part—the importance of which, in comparison with other Christian activities in history is open to argument—almost always appears only within the historical passages. *Secondly*, the biblical foundations of Christian peace efforts receive only very scant mention in the individual contributions, and directly only in the eschatological context, about

whose value for political peace efforts there is wide difference of opinion. *Thirdly*, several of the essays make it clear that since the end of the Middle Ages peacemaking institutions have more and more been shifting from the Christian to the secular domain. *Finally*, Christian concepts are to be found only here and there among the motivations and objectives of present-day peace efforts.

On this basis, one can give the following answer to the question asked above, namely in which of the three focal areas (history, international law, diplomacy) Christian elements receive the most validity. By a wide margin, first place must be awarded to the historical realm, which includes most of the influences which Christian ideas have exercised on international law and diplomacy. By comparison, references to present-day contributions in these two areas are few and far between.

This finding is not surprising, when one considers the academic background of the authors, amongst whom theology is not represented. Even so, the tasks for theology which follow from the individual essays and their conclusions do not emerge any less clearly. *First*, these tasks will be concerned with all the premises which determine the direct and indirect historical conclusions in the essays as a whole, i.e. both the corresponding judgments and statements and the choice in each instance of the historical phenomena dealt with; this has been pointed out several times. All further relevant tasks arise from the fact—which I consider to be decisive—that under biblical influence peace efforts in the Middle Ages were eschatologically oriented and that at the end of the Middle Ages they started to shift from the ecclesiastical to the secular sphere and have been doing so increasingly ever since. The following conclusions may be drawn from this circumstance: 1. The question should be asked as to what extent in fact this eschatological dimension or rather its disappearance from the general social consciousness is connected with the secularization process? This is not simply a question of history, but a decisive one for all Christian-oriented thinking about peace, so long as that thinking is based on the Bible. 2. The biblical reference is the justification for Christian talk of peace, and only to the extent that the biblical reference is essential to it can the Christian side make its own specific contribution to the general work for peace. 3. But if biblically-based talk of peace is to be successful in motivating men's actions and attitudes on the subject of peace, then it must include thinking on the historical-social conditions for war and peace and thus on the actual situation of those who are being addressed. 4. The last two points give rise to a tension which directly or indirectly determines all Christian notions of peace: it is caused on the one hand by the hopes, prospects and precepts which biblical utterances contain and which describe a new world of men and on the other by the limits against which human efforts towards such a new world always find themselves. 5. The Bible itself includes both poles and therefore programs which are based on it have effects ranging from the fatalistic outlook which paralyzes human action to the promotion of political and social Utopias. 6. Theology has the job of finding a path between the two extremes. The breadth of biblical utterances offers it not only the contentual but also the methodological frame of reference. 7. To fulfil its task, theology is also dependent on constant exchange with other disciplines. To this end the collection of essays under consideration has created the essential preconditions.

Meerbusch, Germany

JOHANN M. SCHMIDT

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RICHARD H. DRUMMOND:

## A History of Christianity in Japan

William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1971.  
397 pp. paperback, \$4.95

Another book on the history of Christianity in Japan, authored again by a non-Japanese joins some previous publications by Otis Cary, Charles Iglehart, Winburn Thomas and Joseph Jennes. Richard H. Drummond, one-time Protestant missionary to Japan (for 13 years), has sought to see the whole and the parts of the history "with the sympathetic understanding of one looking from within as well as from without" (p. 11). This publication might occasion a question as to the value of such a project beyond its function to reach non-Japanese speaking readers. One should of course be aware of the fact that a number of volumes that have been undertaken by non-Japanese authors on the history of Japan in general certainly exceeded a mere introduction of the country to the outside world by making an insightful impact upon Japanese scholarship (e.g. G. B. Sansom, Edwin O. Reischauer).

Along this line, the readers will find the author's "thesis" of "what may be called the persistent issue in the history of Christianity in Japan" (p. 11). He states it as follows: "This is the confrontation of the transcendental perspectives of Christian faith, particularly the Christian obligation to obey God rather than man, with the traditional tendency of Japanese political leadership to make loyalty to the political and social structures of the land a religious obligation surpassing all others." (p. 11)

This thesis is of considerable significance in understanding the course of the Christian movement in Japan and perhaps a non-Japanese such as Drummond is better able to bring such a thesis to the attention of readers within and outside Japan. The author's epilogical comments in pursuing this thesis reveal something which the Japanese are generally aware of, though they do not always see it in such an encouraging light. In reference to the 1945 creation of the new constitution to guarantee religious freedom, he says: "the heritage of Japan's past, of course, can hardly be expected to be changed entirely by legal fiat in this or any other aspect; the old customs and ways of thinking are but in the process of change. Yet the nation has apparently committed itself irrevocably to the principle of true religious freedom and a secular state, and the rate of inward change seems rapid. The Christian church in Japan now has full freedom in life and witness. What it does from this point forward will depend largely upon its own resources of vision and spiritual power under God." (p. 364)

The second contribution of this book concerns its comprehensiveness. It covers the totality of Christianity in Japan, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox, from the sixteenth century to the present in one volume. Comparable to such a comprehensive coverage is Otis Cary's *A History of Christianity in Japan* (1909), which appeared in two volumes. Though of necessity it is merely an outline, the author should be commended for providing a lively account of the history, now extending over four hundred years, which "manifests a richness of color, dramatic events, great tragedy, gifted and creative personalities, heights of devotion and courage not to be surpassed by any nation in the world over a comparable period". (p. 363)

Disproportionate emphasis on certain events is unavoidable. An example of this is the section on the persecutions and the subsequent movement of the "Hidden Christians" over two hundred years in the early Roman Catholic history (cf. pp. 73-135). But, though the book is featured primarily as a "survey", it is in this depth-description that the author attempts to express his interpretation and sympathetic understanding of the Christian movement, which is so widely regarded as a small minority having on the whole a slow, if not even development. During this period beginning in the late sixteenth century, the church ceased to exist in Japan as a hierarchical community "from the Roman Catholic standpoint" (p. 112). Yet the author declares: "... despite complete isolation from Christians in other lands, amid historically unparalleled continuity of persecution and hostile surveillance from government officials, Buddhist priests and a majority populace of other religious orientation, thousands of poor and generally uneducated Christians preserved faithfully the main content of their faith and lived by it for more than two centuries. This feat is not matched in the entire history of the Christian church. These hidden Christians provided continuity between the old and new expressions of the Roman Catholic Church in Japan." (p. 117)

The latter development is taken up again in Chapter V, The Roman Catholics From 1859 (cf. pp. 301-336). The same can be applied to the detailed record of the period, 1900-1945, in which time the formation of *Kyodan*, the United Church of Christ, took place (cf. pp. 241-262). The continued disputes, even to date, regarding the *Kyodan* formation, from the Christians' submission to government pressures to the matter of "faith and order", can be reviewed rather positively by the readers of this book in which the formation was looked upon as a demonstration of the integrity and independent leadership among the Japanese Christians. In fact, the national leadership, it is stressed, has prevailed almost from the outset of the Roman Catholic as well as the Protestant mission in Japan.

In this connection, readers will notice only a brief mention of the Anglicans and the Lutherans, who indicated difficulty in joining the *Kyodan* (cf. p. 259), and who, with other denominations such as the Reformed and Baptist, withdrew from the united organization after the war (cf. p. 275 f). The case of the Lutherans which nevertheless has a history of significant contributions is not traced back to its introduction to Japan. This is a minor indication of a shortcoming that arises from the attempted comprehensiveness of the book.

As its third feature, the book draws the readers' attention to a "person-centered" survey rather than to an event or movement description. In the author's own words, "The Christian movement in Japan has been particularly distinguished by the spiritual quality and moral stature of its personnel. I elected to consider in some detail the careers of a number of these men because I feel that the movement cannot be properly understood or evaluated apart from a consideration of the inner as well as outer life of its representative figures. . . ." (p. 241) To illustrate, the inaugural Roman Catholic movement is recorded around the pioneer figure of Francis Xavier, the Orthodox around Ivan Kasatkin, better known as Père Nicolai. The growth of the national church toward independence in the Protestant mission centers upon Kanzo Uchimura, the advocate of the "non-church movement", and Masahisa Uemura, the prominent defender of orthodox Protestantism. These figures were selected not only



as distinguished contributors for building and edifying the churches in Japan but also as the men who gave a penetrating thrust to the whole of the nation by "confronting" the traditional religio-cultural and social patterns and structures of the country. Toyohiko Kagawa justifiably needs ample pages of mention as a leader of the "development of the thought and conscience of the nation during the first half of the twentieth century." (cf. pp. 227-241)

Drummond's book, the latest in a series of similar attempts, certainly deserves to be recommended as a witness to God's miraculous work through the Christian Church, which as one author put it, is a "stranger" in the land called Japan.

Tokyo, Japan

YOSHIRO ISHIDA

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# HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

WALTER BAUER:

## Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity

Fortress Press, Philadelphia,  
1971.

xxv + 326 pp., hard cover,  
\$12.50

Reviewer:

Maurice Schild,  
Adelaide, Australia

At last this famous book (published in 1934) is offered to English readers. Its reception hitherto is outlined in one of the appendices prepared for the second German edition (1963) and augmented for the English version. Gratitude is due to the Philadelphia Seminar for taking up the overdue task of translation. A team of scholars, each responsible for certain sections, have well transmitted the content and the tone of the original and have indeed provided a remarkably even rendition. A comprehensive index is included and contains supplementary bibliographical information of value to every critical reader and student. The work calls for continuing close attention. Bauer maintains the historical primacy of heretical forms of Christianity in the greater (Eastern) part of Christendom into the later second century. This entails the view that heretical groups early accounted for the majority of Christians and causes Bauer to over-interpret some texts which employ conventional rather than statistically precise terminology (pp. 72-72, 193). The "profound silence" which hangs over Christian origins in Edessa as well as in Egypt is seen to be of a kind with the sources' lack of information on Christianity in south and east Asia Minor in the second century, a silence broken only by echoes of a struggle in which ecclesiastical Christianity takes up the fight for its very existence. Rome emerges as the decisive stabilizing force against heresy; her own successful fight enables her to act on behalf of orthodoxy in Corinth (I Clement!) and elsewhere in the East. Bauer's methodological principle, "*audiat et altera pars*" (p. xxi) involves a difficulty: only indirectly can the case of ancient heresy be made audible. The argument from silence is thus germane to a degree. To questions not previously heard Bauer thankfully ventures answers significant for the understanding of early Christianity as a whole. But although the chief fascination of the book lies in its (necessarily) historically constructive approach, it also impressively documents Bauer's mastery of the sources. The combination of these two factors has evoked insights which, though often requiring modification, have become basic for New Testament and early patristic studies. (Cf. the list of recent works on p. 307.) A valuable essay confirming Bauer's conclusions by G. Strecker (appendix 1) adduces the theology of Jewish Christianity as a further example of the *primary* presence of what would later be classified heretical, and seeks to corroborate the thesis that "systematically practiced heresiology begins in Rome". (p. 285)

NIELS THULSTRUP:

## Kierkegaards Verhltnis zu Hegel

Forschungsgeschichte.

Verlag W. Kohlhammer,  
Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne/  
Mainz, 1970.

204 pp., hard cover, DM  
29.50

Reviewer:

Hermann Fischer,  
Mainz, Germany

This research report by the renowned Danish Kierkegaard scholar Niels Thulstrup is meant to prepare the way for a comprehensive clarification of Kierkegaard's highly revealing relationship to Hegel. According to the preface (pp. 9-10) we can await two further works on the subject. One of them will determine, on the basis of concrete historical analysis, how much of Hegel Kierkegaard really knew. The other will provide a fundamental systematic comparison of the two worlds of thought, which cannot be accomplished satisfactorily "without a comprehensive understanding of Hegel's philosophy, dialectical method, and definitive system, and without a corresponding understanding of the fundamental motif and structure of Kierkegaard's thought" (p. 10). The goals are ambitious. The scope of this plan is of significance to the history of Kierkegaard research, because, despite his concentration on fundamentals, Thulstrup betrays a general understanding which still lacks adequate justification. He is aware of this himself (pp. 202 f.). An evaluation of his often pointed remarks will be possible only after the appearance of the two subsequent volumes. The progress of research is portrayed in chronological, not subject order. The author discerns three periods, which run



from about 1870 to 1914, from 1914 to 1933, and from 1933 to the present. The first period is merely sketched briefly because its research (Fredrik Petersen, Georg Brandes, Harald Høffding, and others) did not make significant contributions to the subject. The problem area is sighted and paced off, but scientific clarifications do not progress beyond the initial stage. Only with Hans Reuter's monograph (1914), does the serious investigation of the subject begin. This is followed later with the significant works of Victor Kuhr, Torsten Bohlin, Jens Himmelstrup, Eduard Geismar, and others. Emanuel Hirsch's Kierkegaard studies (1930-1933) round off this period. But, even these works solved neither the historical nor the fundamental questions concerning Kierkegaard's relationship to Hegel, because according to the author, these works did not go beyond the concrete historical relationship of Kierkegaard to German idealism in order to discern more adequately the fundamental divergence, the "incommensurability" of the two thinkers (pp. 149-150). After the predominantly historical studies of the second period, history of research reveals that after 1933 Kierkegaard research, at least in Scandinavia, concentrated on biographical and psychological issues; since 1945 Scandinavian participation in Kierkegaard research has been increasing. Nevertheless, the author concludes that, "in spite of the extensive literature extant on the subject, a new analysis of the problem Kierkegaard-Hegel is by no means superfluous" (p. 204). The following volumes of Thulstrup's Kierkegaard studies will be eagerly awaited.

JOHANNES KADENBACH:

## Das Religionsverständnis von Karl Marx

(Abhandlungen zur Philosophie, Psychologie, Soziologie der Religion und Ökumenik)

Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Munich/Paderborn/Vienna, 1970.

420 pp., cloth, DM 48.00

Reviewer:

Theodor Strohm,  
Berlin, Germany

This theological dissertation presented in Würzburg in 1967 has three goals: to give an insight into the origin of the philosophy and world view of Karl Marx by understanding his interpretation of religion, to join the discussion about the so-called "sociologism in the science of religion", in order to prove the inadequacy of a primarily sociological concept of religion, and to contribute toward the analysis of contemporary Marxist-Leninist critique of religion. This broad framework forces the author to venture into a comprehensive presentation and interpretation of Marx's view of religion, even though passages dealing directly with the subject of religion are relatively scarce in the works of Marx. Kadenbach carried out his task with extraordinary application and with a clear sequence of argumentation. The book provides nearly exhaustive information on Karl Marx's personal and scientific relation to religion. The work, however, is not an effort to actualize and interpret the philosophy of religion in the context of contemporary issues. It does not go beyond the realization that man, as individual and social being, is "the bearer of religiosity" (p. 242); at the same time the author underlines Marx's critical focus, the characterization of religion as "protest against real misery". It is at least possible to attach to Marx's criticism of religion the realization that any religion which tolerates social injustices is an abuse, not a religion. "The religious person . . . will therefore protest in the name of God and religion whenever there is a conflict between human and divine order." (*ibid.*) Kadenbach sees the inadequacy of Marx's view of religion in the spiritualization of religion, which is able to refute precisely these kinds of inference. By placing religion on the level of "ideology", he misconstrues religion as a kind of idealistic philosophy and thus paints a caricature of religion. Marx was suffering from "the value-blindness of sociologistic thinking", because he did not recognize God as the authoritative value of religious behavior. This means that the religious act is understood as "the whole personality's way of looking at things", as an "internal, living relationship of the totality of the self with God". In view of the theological discussion of the concept of religion and the theoretical analyses produced by Collwitzer, Habermas, Bosse and others, the author's evaluation must be regarded as insufficient. The same is true of the short sections which discuss, in rather general terms, the

reception of Marx through to contemporary Marxist-Leninist atheism. On the other hand this work draws on everything in Marx's work that could be of significance for the topic. Marx's personal religious development is carefully sketched; in this connection more attention could have been given to the arrest of the Protestant spirit of the time in a Kantian theological rationalism and a reactionary vulgar liberalism. "The philosophical theory of Marx as the basis of his understanding of religion" is switched around as his definition of religion—a risky procedure—and the question of the scope of Marxist thinking, the political revolutionary drive, is forced aside. His dependency on and development of Hegel and Feuerbach are discussed extensively and with erudition. The concept of ideology is clarified at least in a few dimensions, but again neglecting the political revolutionary dimension. (P. C. Ludz's dissertation on the subject should have been examined here.) Finally the reader finds an exhaustive presentation of individual assertions "on religion". Kadenbach examines the notion "the opiate of the people", as well as the evaluation of specific forms of religion, and once more Marx's personal relation toward religion; "Thus he arrives with his hatred of the world at an emotional rejection of religion, which is in turn the basis of his evaluation." (p. 216) Although its framework of interpretation is relatively narrow from a conceptual and theoretical point of view, the book enriches research on Marx and the history of religion, above all through its wealth of material, its clear disposition, and its carefulness.

JUSTO L. GONZALEZ:  
*A History of Christian Thought, Vol. II*

From Augustine to the Eve of the Reformation. Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1971. 352 pp., cloth, \$8.00

OTTO PESCH:  
*The God Question in Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther*

(Tr. by Gottfried G. Krodell). Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1972. 56 pp., paper, \$1.00

PAUL ALTHAUS:  
*The Ethics of Martin Luther*

A comprehensive survey of the ethical thought of Martin Luther. [The Foundation of the Christian Ethos; The Knowledge of God's Commands; Stations and Vocation (the Orders); The Two Kingdoms and The Two Governments; Love, Marriage, Parenthood; Work; Property, Business and Economics; The State; Great Men in Political History.] (Tr. and with a foreword by Robert C. Schultz). Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1972. 192 pp., cloth, \$5.95

HUBERT KIRCHNER:  
*Luther and the Peasants' War*

(Tr. by Darrell Jodock). Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1972. 56 pp., paper, \$1.00

PAUL HACKER:  
*The Ego in Faith*

Martin Luther and the origins of anthropocentric religion. Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1970. xvi + 146 pp., cloth, \$6.50

J. V. POLLET (Ed.):  
*Julius Pflug—Correspondance*

Vol. I: Le Sillon 1510-1539. E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1969. vi + 593 pp., Gld. \$120.00

HEINRICH OTT:  
*Reality and Faith*

The theological legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (Tr. by Alexander A. Morrison). Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1972. 464 pp., cloth, \$11.50

ERNST TROELTSCH:  
*The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions*

(Tr. by David Reid). John Knox Press, Richmond, 1971. 176 pp., hard cover, \$5.50



# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

HANS BÖRJE HAMMAR:

## Personlighet och samfund

J. A. Eklund och hans tillflöden.

AB Verbum, Stockholm, 1971.

315 pp., hard cover, Skr. 50

Reviewer:

Carl-Henric Grenholm,  
Uppsala, Sweden

The beginning of the twentieth century has not without reason been called a period of renewal in the Swedish Church. Several theologians and church leaders, above all Nathan Söderblom, Einar Billing and J. A. Eklund, tried to find new ways for evangelization in a secularized society and especially to create contact between church and society, Christianity and culture. Hans Börje Hammar, Doctor of Theological Ethics in Lund, has contributed to the research on this interesting theological development with this dissertation. Hammar's thesis is that the center of Eklund's theology is the dialectic between "personality" and "society". This means, according to Hammar, that man becomes a personality, realizes his true humanity, only when he is related to society. He has to be related to nature—as God's cooperator, a steward and ruler over the earth. This applies to his fellowman as producer of both material and spiritual culture, as well as to God, since man realizes himself only in a personal relationship with God. This view of the dialectic between personality and society is formulated by Hammar as a critique of both the naturalistic theory of man as a part of nature, which neglects man's personality, and liberal individualism, which neglects man's relation to society. Hammar wishes to give not only a systematic but also a historic-genetic description of Eklund's theology. His second thesis is that two Swedish philosophers, Erik Gustaf Geijer and Pontus Wikner, have influenced Eklund more than anyone else. Both of them could be called "philosophers of personality" and represent ontological and epistemological idealism. Geijer's "principle of personality"—the idea that man becomes an "I" only in relation to a "You"—and Wikner's "relation theory"—the idea that man realizes himself only in relation to God—are the two main sources to Eklund's theology. But according to Hammar there is also a third source, namely Eklund's home village, Ryda, which represents society and nature in his dialectic. Hammar's book is the first broad description and analysis of Eklund's theology and as such it deals with a lot of important problems, as for instance the relation between church and society, a view on man as a social and a creative being. This could well be a contribution to the Humanum studies currently being undertaken by the World Council of Churches. Hammar's analysis is often not deep enough, some main theories are only described but not interpreted. Eklund's relation to his contemporary theology is hardly discussed, and the thesis that Ryda is a source of his thinking is not much elaborated. But in spite of this criticism, the book is valuable as an orientation on an interesting period in Swedish theology.

PER FROSTIN:

## Politik och hermeneutik

En systematisk studie i Rudolf Bultmanns teologi med särskild hänsyn till hans Luthertolkning.

(Studie Theologica Lundensia, Vol. 33)

CWK Gleerup Verlag, Lund, 1970.

224 pp., Skr. 25.00

This Lund dissertation may be regarded as evidence of renewed critical interest on the part of the Swedish theological tradition for "post-dialectical" continental theology. It is not surprising that the first Bultmann monograph produced in this tradition deals with Bultmann's interpretation of *Luther*. The extensive Swedish Luther studies of the last twenty years, which have been influenced especially by Gustaf Wingren, have created a living systematic theological atmosphere which has clearly enriched the author. His understanding of Luther, which he repeatedly opposes to the "idealistic interpretation of Luther" (especially G. Ebeling and W. von Loewenich), displays features which are evidently derived from Wingren. By energetically working out the "political function of hermeneutics for Luther", the author succeeds in raising hard critical questions about Bultmann's central thesis of the relationship of demythologizing and Luther's doctrine of justification. In essence, Frostin tries to prove that the parallel doctrine of justification and demythologization is illegitimate because the theologies of Luther and Bultmann are decisively different in

Reviewer:  
Inge Lønning,  
Oslo, Norway

structure. Bultmann's theology has a dichotomous structure, whereas Luther's is antagonistic. As an end result, one discovers that when the doctrine of justification is understood within the dichotomous structure of Bultmann's theology, it acquires the function of a conservative political theory (p. 155). The deficiency of the otherwise intelligent and impressive investigation is evident: The premises which the author derives from his text analyses often cannot support the heavy inferences which he makes. The author's "political models" are from the beginning a little too facile. Whoever tries to prove too much proves nothing. Even a pragmatic theology of the seventies ought to take this as a sound methodological principle.

JOHANNES WIRSCHING:

### Was ist schriftgemäss?

Studien zur Theologie des  
äusseren Bibelwortes.

Gütersloher Verlagshaus  
Gerd Mohn, Gütersloh, 1971.  
246 pp., cloth, DM 48.00

Reviewer:  
Rolf Schäfer,  
Oldenburg, Germany

What kind of authority does the Bible have? The author rightfully regards this fundamental issue of theology as more important than the daily problems of politics, social ethics, church reforms or ecumenism. In the first part the Catholic and the Reformation doctrines of Scripture are sketched. Next, the author introduces the somewhat forced distinction between Bible and Scripture. "Bible" denotes a holy book, a work of the world's religious literature, whose content must be "actualized" and in this process is actually silenced. On the other hand, "the living word of Scripture is heard only where people, completely absorbed in the text, constantly recapture and relive anew the movement which is peculiar to the text." The second part analyzes the false use of Scripture. The church may place itself between Scripture and the hearer and assume the dogmatic function of a court of interpretation. "Interpretation" may also seek to enliven the dead letter of the Bible by placing it in the perspective of a *kerygma* or word event. In both cases "an independent religious faith, with its own contents and demands", sets itself up as lord over Scripture. The authority of the Bible has practically speaking made way for enthusiasm. The author presents his own solution in the third part, "the literally certified authority of Scripture". "The text of the Bible . . . speaks exclusively through its time-colored expressiveness." The text itself is not obsolete; on the contrary, the text unmasks the present as obsolete and liberates it for God's future. Curiosity, amazement, insight, admiration—these are the steps which make up the question on which the unraveling of the text depends. What is revealed, however, is not an explicit "center" of Scripture, but an arena for dialog in which yes and no are found, a struggle, a forward provocation. The reader is supposed to become involved in this movement. Not much of the announced literal character of scriptural interpretation remains here of course. Although the author puts great emphasis on the strangeness of the historical text, a clear historical knowledge (of Jesus, for instance) is impossible. A disputed figure already to his disciples and enemies, sought after by the four evangelists, Jesus remains elusive and controversial. The author has no regard at all for "interpretation". He overlooks, however, that the recommended absorption into the text is itself nothing else than "interpretation", otherwise it would not be "translation", but phantasy. Although dedicated to hermeneutics, the book rejects as enthusiasm the recently discussed hermeneutical problematic. Whether the historical preconditions (so called "tradition") make the reader's access to Scripture easier or more difficult, this is no longer even touched upon in the positive reflections of the third part. The experience of certainty that Scripture is norm is interpreted merely as the need for security. In this way the question of why the Scripture has authority, is at once removed from the discussion. But the establishment of the authority of the Bible must indicate the reason why the Bible has authority, otherwise the Christian use of Scripture and its presentation of the ways and means cannot be defended against the charge of arbitrariness.



WOLFHART PANNENBERG:  
*Basic Questions in Theology*

Volume II. (Tr. by George H. Kehm). [Continues from Volume I with chapters on What is Truth? Insight and Faith, Faith and Reason, Toward a Theology of the History of Religions, The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology, Types of Atheism and their Theological Significance, The Question of God, The God of Hope.] Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1971. 249 pp., cloth, \$9.75

PRESTON HAROLD/  
WINIFRED BABCOCK:  
*The Single Reality*

[A trilogy of books presenting a comprehensive view of the work of Preston Harold: Book 1: The Palestinian Mystery Play, Book 2: If Thine Eye Be Single; Book 3: On the Nature of Universal Cross-Action.] Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1971. 386 pp., \$7.95

ERNST BLOCH:  
*Atheism in Christianity*

Herder & Herder, New York, 1971. \$9.50

JOSEF SMOLIK:  
*The Fourth Man and the Gospel*

WSCF Books, Vol. I, No. 2. (Dr. Smolik is Professor of Practical Theology at the Comenius Faculty of Protestant Theology in Prague, Czechoslovakia). World Student Christian Federation, Geneva, 1971. 113 pp., paper cover, Sfr. 4.00 (Annual subscription price for 3-4 issues, Sfr. 10.00)

## ECUMENICS

WALTER J. HOLLENWEGER  
(Ed.):

### Die Pfingstkirchen

Selbstdarstellungen, Dokumente, Kommentare.

(Die Kirchen der Welt, Series A, Vol. VII)  
Evangelisches Verlagswerk,  
Stuttgart, 1971.  
480 pp., cloth, DM 35.00

Reviewer:  
Hermann Delfs,  
Soest, Germany

The Pentecostal movement is a phenomenon not easily comprehensible for either the historian or the confessional expert. W. J. Hollenweger, formerly a Pentecostal preacher, then Reformed theologian active at the World Council of Churches, and presently missiologist at the University of Birmingham, has the merit of having produced, after a series of shorter works, a ten-volume "Handbook of the Pentecostal movement", a comprehensive collection of Pentecostal documents from all over the world. Part of this collection was made available to German readers in the book, *Enthusiastisches Christentum: Die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Zürich and Wuppertal, 1969, (cf. *Lutheran World* Vol. XVII, No. 4, 1970, p. 401). With this book and especially with the collection of essays now published in the series, *Die Kirchen der Welt*, Hollenweger has turned a new page in the history of the confessional research of the ecumenical movement, which was called into being by Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze and his colleagues after the first world war. The method of using a series of monographs written by representatives of different countries and confessionally varied, sometimes even opposing Pentecostal groups at first just escalates considerably the impression of a confusing multiplicity. Nevertheless, the editor's summaries succeed in drawing from the colorful variety of individual essays something like an integrated view, which is confronted with the present position of traditional churches as "practice in reciprocal understanding". In this work the wider public for the first time has the chance of hearing a variety of representatives of Pentecostal denominations: church and community leaders, historians, educators and psychologists, evangelists and Bible school instructors. They all reply to the question: How do the Pentecostals see themselves *today*, since after sixty years of marginal existence they have now joined the ranks of the Christian churches? The small groups of inspired people at the beginning of this century—when the news of "pentecostal" revivals

in Wales, India, and California reached the European churches—which were at that time excluded by the established churches as “enthusiasts”, have become a world movement, which today calls for reconsideration of the essence of Christian fellowship and opens itself to ecumenical dialog. The Pentecostal movement, which still regards itself as an extension of the nineteenth century sanctification movement, experienced after nearly forty years of isolation the impact of Lesslie Newbigin’s voice, who argued in his *The Household of God* (1953) that the ecumenical movement could not do without the Pentecostals’ contribution, since “Christian life is rooted in the actual experience of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power”. Since then the Pentecostal’s dialog with the traditional churches has not been discontinued. M. de Melo, evangelist and leader of the Pentecostal church “Brazil for Christ”, which in sixty years has grown to a membership of one million, puts it this way: “We must eliminate the small spirit which splits people into denominations. The ecumenical movement helps us to reach this goal.” De Melo, who has joined the ecumenical movement with his church, recognizes the need for social and political responsibility on the part of the Latin American Pentecostal movement with its powerful missionary dynamism: “While we convert a million, the devil dis-converts ten million through hunger, misery, militarism, dictatorship.” He is struggling for the kind of evangelism that will produce Christians who “are able to be a witness in the society in which they live”. And so he is presently constructing the world’s largest church in Sao Paulo which will have not only a seating capacity of 25,000, but also rooms for adult education, vocational schools and training workshops. The Pentecostal movement has exercised an extraordinary attraction in Latin America, Africa, and parts of East Asia because from the very beginning it has given young churches full autonomy and has raised an indigenous ministry that is trained first in street gatherings and only afterwards in Bible schools. “Pentecost enables the congregation to witness!” This insight has enabled the Pentecostal movement to create living congregations. Jakob Zopfi, secretary of the “Swiss Pentecostal mission”, discovers: “Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not the hobby horse of the Pentecostal movement. There are higher and equivalent concerns which we have in common with other churches. The Pentecostal movement must by all means listen to the witness of the whole body, it must submit to ‘questions, tests and clarifications’”. It is increasingly acknowledged in Pentecostal circles that the presence of the Holy Spirit expresses itself in the edification of the congregation in its missionary activity. This stimulus of the Pentecostal movement to Christianity has been understood and approved by the traditional churches in the charismatic movements of our day. This review could touch just a few points of this instructive work, which Hollenweger supplemented with a phenomenological description of Pentecostal piety, statistical data, and a comprehensive bibliography. Thus he has made a significant contribution to the development of ecumenical research on religious bodies, a discipline which, according to P. Meinhold, “describes and evaluates from an ecumenical standpoint the contemporary life of Christianity, as it finds expression in various churches and fellowships.”

GERALD JONAS:

## On Doing Good

The Quaker Experiment.

Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1971.

After persuading the reader that “do-goodism” is an inappropriate concept (even when applied to the Quakers) in today’s world, Gerald Jonas confesses the want of a better term and leaves the title of his book, *On Doing Good* stand. It is a very readable book, interesting as much for the light it casts on the American Indian (about one-third of the book is dedicated to this subject) as for what it reveals about the Quakers. Having much admiration for the Friends myself, I was hoping for a more comprehensive report on Quaker thought



177 pp., hard cover, \$5.95

Reviewer:  
Dale Ott,  
Geneva

and involvement around the world. This would of course have required a much larger study. But since the major part of the "Cases" section deals almost exclusively with the American Friends Service Committee, one wonders whether the book might not better have been entitled "The AFSC Experiment" since the AFSC represents only one "experiment" in Quakerism. Unfortunately, the divisions among Quakers only demonstrates that they have not always achieved "consensus", one of their most venerated ideals. The author does not deny these divisions (the Quakers after all are still one of the most unified Protestant groups), but it would have been helpful if Jonas had treated a little more the variety of expressions of Quakerism today. Nevertheless, Gerald Jonas (a graduate of Yale and a staff writer on "The New Yorker") tells his story well, and he deserves a reading. Here is a clear reminder that there are alternatives to the "status quos" of hatred, injustice and violence. Certainly the Quakers have done (and are doing) very much to point to, and exemplify, these alternatives.

WALTHER VON LÖWENICH:

### Der moderne Katholizismus vor und nach dem Konzil

Luther Verlag, Witten, 1970.  
472 pp., cloth, DM 32.00

Reviewer:  
August Hasler,  
Rome, Italy

This book is a thoroughly revised and expanded edition of *Der moderne Katholizismus*. It is no doubt a daring undertaking to write a portrayal of Catholicism before and after the Council. The author's courage deserves full recognition. In view of the diversity and often controversial nature of phenomena, tendencies, and currents, von Löwenich cannot be reproached for having given prime importance to the official documents of Rome. This procedure is justified especially for the period preceding the Council, which as a rule is discussed more extensively than the period of the Council and the time immediately following. In this way the author succeeds in portraying the main lines of modern Catholicism. He raises serious and critical questions, which are especially important for Catholics, since one's own tradition is constantly being critically examined. It is especially helpful that the problem of truth was placed in the center of the discussion. Of course it must be asked whether the chosen method provides for an adequate delineation of recent developments in Catholicism. Does not the position of Rome become overemphasized? Does this explain why the author regards as church-divisive several issues which others would regard as differences in emphasis? The description of the development of Catholicism after the Council is definitely too short and inaccurate. It is above all unfortunate that the dialog between Lutherans and Catholics on both the international and the national levels received so little attention. One can hardly be satisfied with the short observation: "There was also a meeting between the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican in Strasbourg in August, 1965." (p. 353) The outcome of such dialogs could provide the book with a different and, at times, more encouraging outlook. These limitations and an occasionally apologetic tone aside, von Löwenich's critical remarks on the Roman Catholic Church, which are unfortunately justified in too many cases, provide the brotherly admonition which is indispensable for true church reform and therefore Christian unity.

H. CONRAD HOYER:  
*Ecumenopolis U.S.A.*

The Church in Mission in Community. [Defines the nature of the church and its role in contemporary society and makes suggestions on how its tasks can be performed most effectively.] Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1971. 159 pp., paper cover, \$2.95

JOHANNES KNUDSEN:  
*Called Out of Chaos*

Modern Man and His Religion. Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971. 88 pp., paper cover, \$1.95

HANS KÜNG:  
*Infallible?*

An Inquiry. (Tr. by Edward Quinn.) Doubleday, New York, 1971. 262 pp., \$5.95 (cf. review of original *Unfehlbar* in *Lutheran World*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, 1972, p. 184)

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# MISSIONOLOGY

ROBERT F. SPENCER  
(Ed.):

## Religion and Change in Contemporary Asia

Oxford University Press,  
London, 1971.  
172 pp., hard cover, £3.15

Reviewer:  
Won Yong Ji,  
Geneva

In Asia, which is the birthplace of the great religions of mankind, religious development plays a peculiar and predominant role, affecting both positively and negatively the various aspects of contemporary Asia: change and modernization, social stability and advancement, familism and nationhood, nationalism and the intellectual resistance to alien ideas. Frequently religion becomes the cause of national and international conflicts, as illustrated, for example, in the delicate situations of India and Pakistan, Israel and the Arab countries. This book, edited by a professor of anthropology, presents case studies of the contemporary role of religion in seven Asian nations. The articles are written by specialists representing the academic disciplines of history, anthropology, political science, and history of religions. In China today there is strong evidence that Buddhism may be passing into history, mainly caused by its incompetence to deal with the religious, cultural, intellectual, ethical, social and political life of China. In Japan, on the other hand, it remains to be seen whether the rapidly growing 'New Religions' can succeed in developing their own style and method of modernization into which the Japanese can assimilate themselves. The four strong and well-organized major religious groupings in Vietnam, namely, Catholics, Buddhists, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, determine the strength, the structure and the future outcome of the century. Modernization in its uniquely Indian form bears a form of 'Indian' puritanism. Such modernization does not refer to a change from traditional forms to a modernistic and westernized way of looking at the world and acting. The road to modernization goes through Hinduization and Sanskritization. Theravada Buddhism of Burma has as its basis the sense of independence characteristic of the Burmese Union. The renewed association of Buddhism with nationalism and its cultivation might be Burma's unique contribution to world culture. Pakistan has made much of its Islamic tradition as the source of its nationhood. Several years ago we have experienced in the context of Java the worst kind of conflict caused by politico-ideological poles. It seems that these writings purposely (and perhaps appropriately) omit comment on the general impact of Judaeo-Christianity which is also noticeable in Asia. The following remark of Manning Nash, referring to Southeast Asia, seems likewise applicable to the rest of Asia: "Religion is inextricably intertwined with national identity, cultural creativity, and the craving for modernization in a distinctive Asian style."

WOLFGANG BAUER:

## China und die Hoff- nung auf Glück

Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich,  
1971.  
703 pp., hard cover

Reviewer:  
Gerd Decke,  
Geneva

Sinologist Wolfgang Bauer's book on China and the hope for happiness speaks to one of the most fundamental theological and philosophical issues of our time. Apparently regardless of cultural differences, humankind has entertained eschatological hopes and utopian ideals through the ages. Despite all the efforts of Confucian neo-orthodoxy to keep the world view of the Chinese people within the limits of the "Middle Kingdom", it was not possible to suppress in the long run all the traditional quasi-religious hopes and dreams of a golden age which would come again, an age of great equality, of paradise "behind the caves". It is this undercurrent of Chinese history—the Taoist natural and the Buddhist heavenly paradise, the superstitions and the hopes for a messianic transformation of present misery in the many different secret societies—which according to Bauer provides some of the elements in the thrust of Maoism which conveys such a definitively religious temper and makes it possible to speak of religious analogies in Maoism. Virtually all rebellious movements in Chinese history have been associated with some kind of anti-Confucian religious enthusiasm and were carried out by two groups generally considered conservative pillars of society in the West—the peasants



- and soldiers. Bauer's masterful interpretation which covers the whole range of Chinese tradition from the I-Ching to the present offers a wealth of revealing perspectives on the sometimes bewildering course of ancient and contemporary Chinese history. For German language readers interested in the missiological implications of the Chinese experience, this book is a must.
- M. M. THOMAS:  
*Salvation and Humanisation*  
Some Crucial Issues of the Theology of Mission in Contemporary India. [Contents: Salvation and Humanisation; Dialogue with Hinduism on Humanisation; Dialogue with Secularism on True Humanisation.] The Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1971. 64 pp., paper cover, Rs. 3.95
- MARTIN JARRETT-KERR,  
C. R.:  
*Patterns of Christian Acceptance*  
Individual Response to the Missionary Impact 1550-1950. Oxford University Press, London, 1972. 360 pp., £4.50
- JAMES A. COGSWELL:  
*Response*  
The Church in Mission to a World in Crisis. John Knox Press, Richmond, 1971. 160 pp., paper, \$2.50
- C. JOUCO BLEEKER/GEO  
WIDENGREN (Eds.):  
*Religions of the Present*  
(Historia Religionum, Vol. II). E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1971. iv + 715 pp., cloth, Gld. 120.-
- JAMES W. WHITE:  
*The Sōkagakkai and Mass Society*  
Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1970. xii + 376 pp., \$12.95 (cf. review in *Lutheran World*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, 1970, *Sōka Gakkai—Japan's Militant Buddhists*, by Noah S. Brannen)

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## CHURCH AND SOCIETY

DON ADAMS (Ed.):

### Education in National Development

Routledge & Kegan Paul,  
London, 1971.  
277 pp., cloth, £2.50

Reviewer:  
Loren Halvorson,  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

One of the main areas of concern and investment in "developing" nations is education. The creation of educational systems and policy raises a whole series of related questions having to do with economic, political, and social development. How do cultural values, economic investment, population, emigration, and concerns for efficiency and stable development relate to the educational task of a nation? These questions are examined by a number of scholars from the fields of economics, education, and the social sciences in *Education in National Development*. While the studies are focused on the particular needs and opportunities in "developing" nations, it is obvious that the authors, almost exclusively from the United States, reflect the uncertainty and debates within educational circles in the "developed" West. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of this volume is to reveal the deeper theoretical and practical issues facing education in developed nations as these same issues are seen in fresher context in the more fragile educational experiences in other cultures. The book serves as a helpful introduction to the complexities of designing new education systems as well as changing present ones in "developing" nations. The authors are careful to note that there are no simple solutions. A number of the contributors provide helpful tools to analyze the educational needs as well as develop new models for education. One of the most helpful chapters was the one by Everett

Reimer (a collaborator of Ivan Illich). He describes the following functions: 1. custodial care, 2. selection for social roles and social status, 3. value formation, and 4. cognitive education. Another chapter of particular help is "Types of Schooling for Developing Nations" by Lawrence Thomas with a very helpful analysis of four types of educational systems: 1. memorizing, 2. training, 3. developing intellect, and 4. problem solving. Other chapters deal with the analysis of who has access to schooling in various cultures, productivity and efficiency, use of new technology in instruction, effectiveness of educational systems, educational output, brain drain, and administrative policy. While the language of the volume at times suffers from educational "metaphysics", there are some important points made by the book: 1. The necessity of collaborative work between educators and social scientists which is of particular importance in the complexity of educational work in the many different cultures and conditions throughout the nations. 2. The need for skill and care in determining the most effective models of education based on a full understanding of the nation, its stage of development, and a verification of educational systems. 3. A pluralism of educational models since no single system seems adequate and more likely a combination of approaches might be desirable. 4. The need for some changes within education itself whether in "developed" or "developing" nations. This volume is further evidence of the need for the educational establishment to raise serious questions about its performance and achievement of declared goals. 5. The need for multi-disciplinary approaches which link educational development with economic, social, political, and other human systems. One would hope in such volumes to find more examples of experiments that are being developed. Such programs as that of Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, would provide documentation of the problems and possibilities in developing nations. Such data is also of importance to the consideration of more general and theoretical issues which constitute the larger portion of this volume. One suspects there is probably a great deal more going on in education as a result of current self analysis and criticism than tends to be reported in research papers, journals, and books. Indeed some of the best solutions to the problems of education may come from other quarters; a fate that is befalling other disciplines as well. The authors illustrate both the strength and the weakness of employing social and educational analysis. The data that is presented and the suggestions offered are very helpful and important to anyone involved in education and national development. However, there are much deeper questions that deal with the "soul" of education apart from which it is unlikely that "developing" nations will do any more than simply repeat the patterns of education of the technologically "developed" nations. The deeper questions of values, purposes, goals, and priorities in education are, of course, being explored in other volumes. The philosophers, poets, theologians, humanists, politicians, and revolutionaries are placing radical questions before educators. Hopefully the reshaping of educational foundations during this time may help the developing nations build on both the successes and failures of others. Furthermore, it may be hoped that the "developed" nations may learn from the "developing" countries some of the more basic human and fundamental goals of education which often have been obscured in the preoccupation with material and economic development. Very little of this is reflected in the book and is one of its weaknesses. That a volume on education in national development should be written in 1971 almost exclusively by members of established academic institutions in the United States is continuing evidence of the fact that we still see a one way flow of resources and values from the "developed" nations to the "developing" ones. The education of the "developed" nations is as important a part of the problems discussed by these authors as the reverse.



GUNNAR MYRDAL:

## The Challenge of World Poverty

A World Anti-Poverty Program in Outline.

Pantheon Books, New York, 1970.

xv + 518 pp., \$8.95

Reviewer:

Darrol Bryant,  
Elmira, Ontario

Gunnar Myrdal, Sweden's gift to social science and present Chairman of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Latin American Institute, has written a book which the liberal intellectual tradition will call "a social manifesto for our times" and which in terms of the growing, deepening disparity between "developed and under-developed countries" must stand as a monument to the bankruptcy of that liberal tradition. This policy sequel to the *Asian Drama* (three volumes, New York, 1968), like its ill-fated counterpart, namely, the Johnson "War on Poverty", is unambiguously intended to incorporate the underdeveloped, potentially dissenting, nations into the western-democratic-capitalistic-world. Though he chides western nations for short-range views he does not question any of our foundations. Thus, rather than challenging his readers, Myrdal confirms our wrong-headed assumption that the problem of "underdevelopment" is finally and fundamentally rooted in the underdeveloped countries themselves, and assures us that if we try harder (i.e. are more realistic) we will prevail. Published in the U.S.A. for North Atlantic consumption, this book proceeds to direct over half its attention to what the underdeveloped countries "must do" (p. 45). And what reforms are needed? The underdeveloped countries are told they must spread birth control and literacy, carry out significant land reform, fight internal corruption and strengthen the state if they want to be modernized. If one questions the equation development = modernization, he is told that "the modernization ideals which have been chosen as value premises are in a more fundamental sense simply rational" (p. 240). And who after all wants to be irrational? Can one cast doubt on the desirability of modernization when one looks at the example of advanced industrialized countries (Sweden after all is the welfare state *par excellence*)? This is where the development process finally leads. Though the book claims universal scope, the socialist countries of the west are not mentioned, nor is the most impressive contemporary example which has broken through dependency and domination to the road of significant development: the People's Republic of China. The fundamentally liberal reformist proposals Myrdal makes ought not be obscured by calling them "radical". They move within an orbit of familiarity, not deep-rooted change. The section dealing with the developed nations has the honesty to admit that "the commercial policies of the developed countries are almost systematically rigged against the efforts of underdeveloped countries to rise out of underdevelopment" (p. 294), that UNCTAD was a failure (p. 301), and that aid is tied to "political interest" (p. 351). Yet in an incredible twist of logic, Myrdal assures us that "people in the developed countries desire the fastest possible development of underdeveloped countries everywhere in the world . . ." (p. 259). The failure of the First Development Decade, the miniscule amount of significant assistance (i.e. non-military and non-politically interested aid), the growing domination of underdeveloped countries by multi-national corporations, and the reluctance to move beyond guilt-generated aid to the tough questions of *power, structures of trade*, and "the good life" make this assumption untenable. The challenges are serious and deep-rooted—and Myrdal should know that. To follow him through his tour of "The Need for Radical Reforms in Underdeveloped Countries", and "The Responsibility of the Developed Countries", to "The Politics of Development" is to visit the paternalistic, fuzzy-minded, ever optimistic, rationalized world of the liberal mind.

FRED H. BLUM:

## The Ethics of Industrial Man

The author is head of an English center which deals with experiments leading to a new understanding of the spiritual dimensions of human life and their relationship to contemporary problems of industrial man. He is concerned with the development of a new human consciousness and a social order centered in the whole man and therefore

An Empirical Study of Religious Awareness and the Experience of Society.

Routledge & Kegan Paul,  
London, 1971.  
290 pp., cloth, £3

Reviewer:

Christa Sprunge,  
Mainz

in "the holy within man". The present work, which was preceded by a book on "work and community", deals with basic questions concerning religious awareness, experience of society, and the way in which people participate in social processes. It evaluates the empirical findings of group work and interviews in two industries in England and the United States. Although the sample is small, care was taken that it is representative of groups and individuals working in industries. The basic problem which was analyzed is the relationship between people's becoming aware of a universal reality and their becoming aware of society through others, as well as the relationship between this awareness and their participation in socio-political life. The main point of this analysis of relationships are the strategic factors which determine the ethics of industrial man. Blum tries to promote better understanding of the questions which he raises by taking as starting point not the sociology of religion, but the bridging of the gap between social science, philosophy, and theology. With the data and inferences of his book he hopes to provide hypotheses and suggestions for further research. It would in fact be desirable for the book to receive a broad readership, namely theologians who hope to lead others to the living truth of the gospel through constant repetition of Christian concepts (God, Jesus Christ, cross and resurrection, kingdom of God), and socially committed people, who are striving to transform the industrial order of society by educational and socio-political means. Blum helps the reader to understand each methodological step and the underlying idea of a universal and historical reality in such a way that he is thus enabled not only to grasp the findings presented, but also to evaluate more adequately his own experience of the religious and social understanding of the people with which he lives and works. Blum's findings are depressing. People who have been instructed by and tied to the church, aside from a small number of exceptions, do not have a better, more correct understanding of Christian truth, than the unchurched. The doctrine of man's sinfulness has exercised such a pervasive influence that scepticism and cynicism predominate over the possible power of hope for a new man in Christ and a new society. Blum himself is full of hope. True awareness, honest perception of reality, and our potential capacity to grow are interdependent. He provides some vistas of how a new society could be built step by step.

IVAN ILLICH:  
*The Church, Change and Development*

Herder & Herder, New York, 1970. 125 pp., cloth, \$4.95; paper, \$2.45

MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN:  
*The Ethics of Revolution*

Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1971. 56 pp., paper cover, \$1.25

*Between Honesty and Hope*

Documents from and about the church in Latin America. Issued at Lima by the Peruvian Bishops' Commission for Social Action. (Tr. by John Drury). Maryknoll Publications, New York, 1970. xxiv + 247 pp., paper, \$2.95

PEDRO S. DE ACHUTEGUI,  
S. J., (Ed.):  
*Mission and Development*

Ecumenical Conversations. (Cardinal Bea Studies, No. 1). Loyola House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila University, Manila, 1970. 179 pp., paperback, \$3.00



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# PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

JAMES LUTHER ADAMS/  
SEWARD HILTNER (Eds.):

## Pastoral Care in the Liberal Churches

Abingdon Press, Nashville,  
1970.

243 pp., \$4.75

Reviewer:

Arthur H. Becker,  
Columbus, Ohio

Liberal churches in America—those of an essentially Unitarian-Universalist viewpoint—have long been on the forefront of prophetic social action, but paradoxically, have not taken a position of leadership in the continuing practice of the American pastoral care movement. It is this paradox that captivated the interest of Rev. Carl Wennerstrom, a Unitarian chaplain, who by his untimely death in 1963 had achieved a position of leadership in the clinical pastoral education movement. The core of the book represents the editing by Hiltner, of the unfinished doctoral dissertation in which Wennerstrom was exploring this paradox. Wennerstrom was concerned to pursue the discrepancy he felt between Unitarian and Universalist theory (or ideology) and the practice of these churches. The lives and teachings of Channing Pollock and Theodore Parker, founders of liberal churches in America were explored to discover their pastoral emphases. The ethos of the liberal, Wennerstrom finds, is found to center around four paradoxes: a *rational* faith in man and God is the first of these. *Reformism*, the active effort to correct the ills of society resulting in an underemphasis on the needs and ills of individuals is the second. A penchant for the *dramatic*, or the spectacular social cause, for leadership in that reform, which again tends to ignore the unspectacular needs of troubled persons is the third. The final paradox is the creation of *distance*, the stance of helping by being involved in establishing social resources and referring the needy to these resources, rather than becoming personally and directly involved in caring. Thus Wennerstrom comes out as being quite critical of his liberal church so far as direct face-to-face pastoral care, but also appreciative of the broader scope of involvement in human betterment at the programmatic and social reform level. Seward Hiltner suggests that these central characteristics or paradoxes are not unique to the radical-liberal churches, but may well motivate a larger segment of American Protestantism, partially because of a general trend toward a "more liberal theology on the part of churches in America" as well as the discouragement with the arduous task of personal pastoral work. One might well view the entire "social action" movement which is current in American ecclesiology as a reflection of this tendency to swing the pendulum away from exclusive concern for *Seelsorge* which had dominated much of American practical theology, to a new exclusivism, "ministry to structures" rather than to persons. Wennerstrom, Hiltner and Adams are all saying in this book that one must strike a tensioned equilibrium between these two exclusives. An area of special interest to Lutherans is the understanding of man in liberal theology. The center of this doctrine, according to John Hayward who supplied this chapter, is a "sober optimism" about man "where the primary responsibility for human progress rests upon man himself". The basic theme is heroic, the essential sermonic mood is exhortation, the appeal is to persons eager for challenge to respond with courage. Wennerstrom holds that the liberal finds himself at a loss in the face of immediate tragedy since his whole inclination is to solve problems rather than to suffer alongside the stricken. The faith of the liberal depends upon faith in an unfailing human power to avoid or transcend every potentially tragic event. Moving beyond the sometimes naive heroism of an eighteenth century Unitarian view of man, Wennerstrom strives to find a transforming resource for man in the appropriation of the "hope of new strength arising out of weakness", according to Hayward. This new strength is to be found in the recognition of dependencies, specifically on faithful human fellowship which rallies to and remains with the sufferer, though bereft of all heroic resources for rescue. This thrust of a "Christian humanism" renewing classical liberal doctrines of man is suggested as the special contribution of

the liberal churches to pastoral care as understood by Wennerstrom and others who follow his model. In this depth of human ministration to another is to be found the liberal's understanding of a doctrine of grace. Somewhat paradoxically for a Unitarian theology, Wennerstrom calls for a revival among liberals of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but this too, is seen in essentially humanistic forms, being mediated once again by the minister, who fully courageously and unselfconsciously enters another's woe to mediate the gift of healing. "God, or his Holy Spirit, is incarnate in the actualities of natural events and in the events of human history . . . maintaining them in loving mutual endurance." It will be recognized that this understanding of God's preserving and sustaining activity and love motivates many others than Unitarian or Universalist pastors. But what is clearly still missing is any significant understanding of God's redemptive activity. The book continues with two extensive essays, one by Charles R. Stinnette on "liberal and existential dimensions of pastoral care" and one by James L. Adams on social ethics and pastoral care. Both of these are significant essays in their own right, but seem somehow a bit inconsistent with the rest of the book. Hiltner closes the book with an assessment of the contribution of liberals to pastoral care which is essentially a historical review of the development of the clinical pastoral care movement in the United States. While the core of this book centers on Wennerstrom's own study of pastoral care in the Unitarian-Universalist churches, it extends beyond this to explore the contribution of liberal pastors of any denomination. Liberal, as Hiltner defines it in the book, is not narrowly restricted to a particular theological position, but involves rather a theological method. In the field of pastoral care, Hiltner's judgment is probably correct, that all of us—particularly in the field of pastoral care—owe much to these liberal pioneers who were concerned to liberate the churches from a narrow literalistic-dogmatic stance regarding revealed truth. In this sense, the book is a very useful record of these contributions, and points up the continuing need to come to terms not only with the imminent but the transcendent dimensions of pastoral care in a manner which is not once again constricting or rigid.

ROBERT C. WORLEY:

## Change in the Church

A Source of Hope.

Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1971.  
128 pp., paper, \$2.25

Reviewer:  
William W. Everett,  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

*Change in the Church* is written for church leaders and seminarians in middle class (especially Presbyterian) churches. Worley conveys his message with broad strokes and an easy style. He seeks to replace an individualistic faith with participation in the Body of Christ, which is the actual group of people trying to continue Christ's ministry. The primary task of such churchmanship is to elicit the participation and contributions of competent members frustrated by self-interested elites. To the extent that the church sets up structures in which persons can communicate, contribute, and be reconciled as equal partners in mission the church has spoken the gospel. The structure of the church is its message. Worley employs a communications model of organization to offset one-way authoritarianism. We must see beyond formal structures and deal with the actual processes of interaction. Persons' demands and criticisms conceal the desire to participate by contributing a gift which has an appropriate place somewhere in the church's life. Worley thus tends to a functionalist optimism that every claim can be accommodated and that the church can be just and yet also an effective instrument within society. Employment of his perspective would demand a greatly increased attention to group dynamics and counselling to overcome the personal irrationalities which make rational organizational life so fragile and difficult. Implicit in his approach is the model of the community organizer for the pastoral role, whose purpose is not to dominate or control an organization but only to enable persons to cooperate in establishing and reaching goals. Unfortunately, Worley does not draw on the relevant literature



to articulate this thrust. Worley over-estimates the capacity of the average part-time churchman to think through the continual change he demands for church vitality. Moreover, theology, which he sees as crucial for decision-making in a fluid and voluntary church, emerges as a pragmatic ideological tool at the service of church reconciliation, thus further undermining people's confidence in any stable reference point. Finally, his presentation would have been helped by employing more case examples to show how differing policies and church traditions have differing problems and should adopt his communication model in different ways.

ROLF LÜPKE/GEORG  
FRIEDRICH PFÄFFLIN:

### Herausgefordert durch die Dritte Welt

Dargestellt am Beispiel Brasiliens. Eine fächerübergreifende Unterrichtseinheit.

(Reihe: Religionspädagogische Praxis, Serie A 1)  
Calwer Verlag/Kösel Verlag,  
Stuttgart/Munich, 1971.  
145 pp., paperback, DM  
12.00

Reviewer:  
Lindolfo Weingärtner,  
Sao Leopoldo

The authors have consciously abandoned a theory of religious education, which conceives of religious instruction in the schools as "leading to faith and church life", but ultimately ignores the socio-political involvement of the Christian. Religious instruction is no longer to take place in a sacral ghetto; its language and content are secular: "The world writes the agenda of religious instruction." (p. 72) The carefully prepared units of study are interdisciplinary, that is, they can be used as source both for religious instruction and for courses of history, geography, and social studies. Religious instruction is seen "at the crossroads of society and church". By incorporating material from other disciplines, religious instruction does not overstep its boundaries. Just in this way it carries out its function of developing the student's responsibility towards the burning points of the social and political questions of mankind. The problems of developing nations are illustrated in the case of Brazil for German students. The picking out of one particular country was done with exemplary purpose. It is not a matter of providing mere information and satisfying a tourist curiosity for an exotic object. Fundamental issues and elementary human concerns are to be discussed. Confrontation with the concrete realities of the relationship between industrialized and developing nations is meant to arouse the pupil's conscience. The given content is "problem-oriented". Social inequities are sharply and relentlessly portrayed. Subtle forms of economic imperialism are unmasked with the help of statistics (terms of trade, the falling prices of agricultural products, the rising prices of industrial products). A distinction is made between the "motivation and direction of church action with regard to development aid in the third world" and the purely humanitarian, political, and economical motivation of development aid. Statistical information, reports, and discussions of principles are interwoven with biblical texts (and "corresponding texts" of our time) which are now regarded as relevant and "hot". The authors, evidently, have made profitable use of suggestions stemming from G. Otto, B. Klafki, H. Halbfas, and others. It is clear that they are engaged in theological cliff-wandering and that the attempt to transcend the religious ghetto can easily result in dissolution of the Christian faith into categories of social ethics. It would have been profitable to have a Brazilian co-author, since both authors obviously do not know first-hand the country in question. Several inaccuracies of data and inadmissible generalizations could have been avoided. Besides that, Brazil would have been treated less as an object and more as a partner in dialog. It is evidently difficult to avoid—even in an ultra-progressive textbook—the one-way avenue of colonial practice with all its consequences. The book as a whole must nevertheless be considered a courageous attempt to clear new ground for religious education.

D. WAYNE MONTGOMERY:  
*Healing and Wholeness*

[Doctor-clergy teamwork: Makes a significant contribution to doctor-clergy interaction and therefore should be a factor in the much-needed emergence of a new era of interprofessional collaboration. Topics include: the sexual revolution, telling the terminal patient the truth, prolonging life versus prolonging dying, and the ethical questions raised by organ transplants.] John Knox Press, Richmond, 1971. 240 pp., hard cover, \$7.50

CHARLES F. KEMP:  
*A Pastoral Counseling  
Guidebook*

Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1971. 176 pp., paper, \$3.50

MARTIN GOLDSTEIN/  
E. J. HAEBERLE/  
WILL MCBRIDE:  
*The Sex Book*

A Modern Pictorial Encyclopedia. Herder & Herder, New York, 1971. cloth, \$9.95

ROCKWELL C. SMITH:  
*Rural Ministry and the  
Changing Community*

Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1971. 208 pp., cloth, \$4.75

MARCUS FOSTER:  
*Making Schools Work*

Strategies for Christian Education. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1972. 144 pp., cloth, \$5.95; paper, \$2.65

PIERRE BENOIT/ROLAND  
MURPHY (eds.):  
*Theology, Exegesis, and  
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Herder & Herder, New York, 1971. paper, \$2.95



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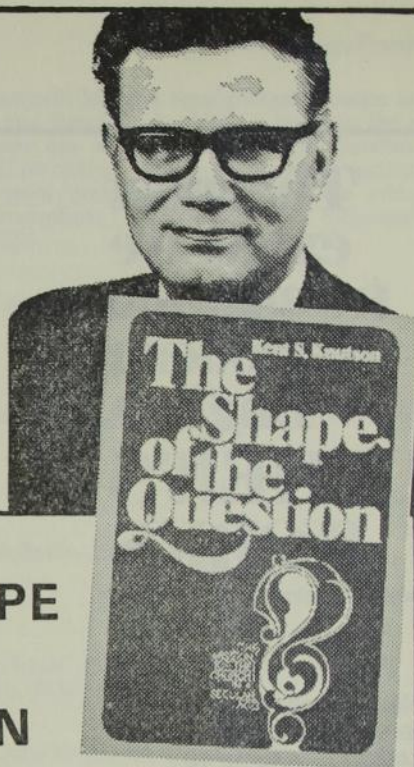
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Published on behalf of the  
Lutheran World Federation  
by the Commission on Studies.

Editor:

Dr. LaVern K. Grosc

LUTHERAN WORLD is published in Geneva, Switzerland and appears quarterly. Address all editorial correspondence and inquiries regarding subscriptions to:

LUTHERAN WORLD  
150, route de Ferney  
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

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LUTHERAN WORLD is indexed in the *Index to Religious Periodical Literature*, published by the American Theological Library Association, McCormick Seminary Library, 800 W. Belden Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60614.

Printed in the United States of America by Augsburg Publishing House,  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415.

